

POEMS
OF
J·S·LE FANU

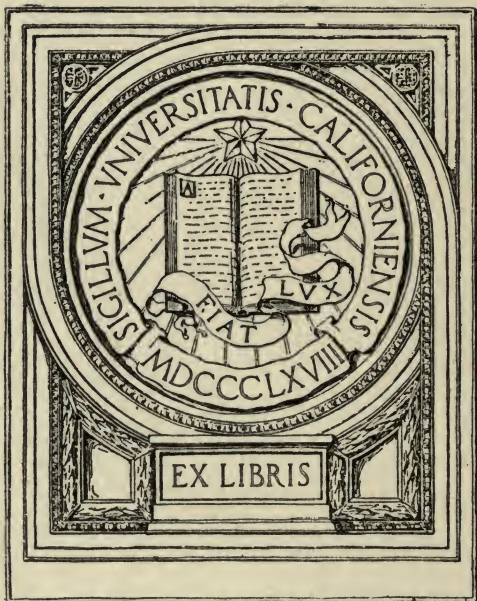
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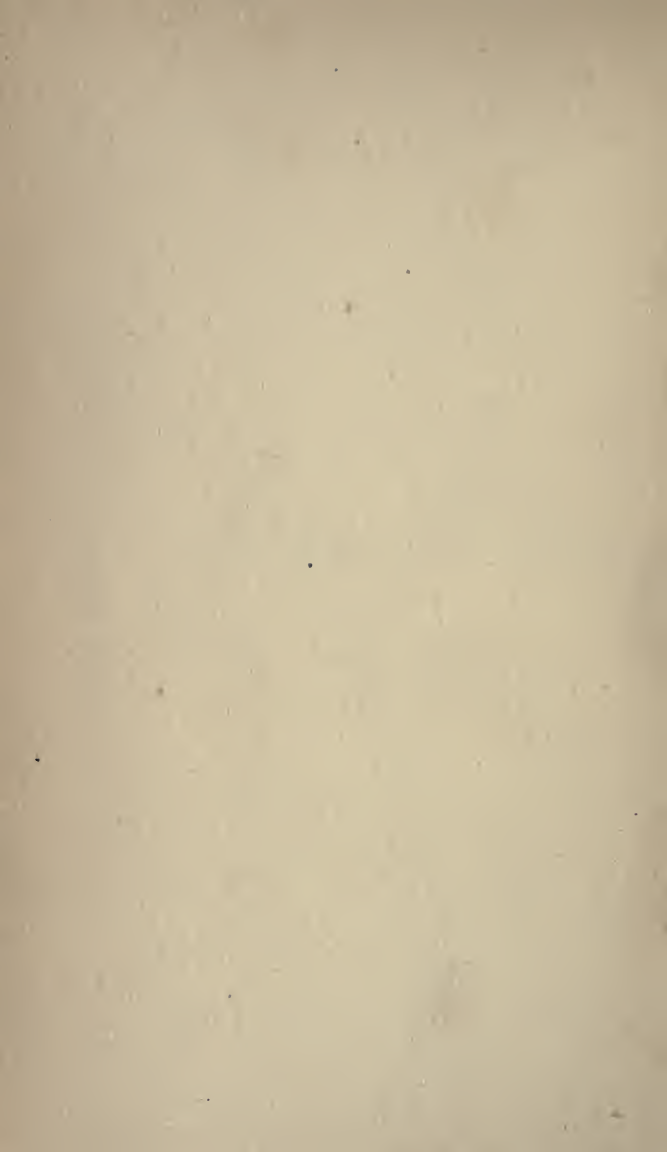




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POEMS OF J. S. LE FANU





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JOSEPH SHERIDAN LE FANU.

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THE

POEMS

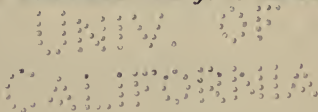
OF

JOSEPH SHERIDAN LE FANU

EDITED BY

ALFRED PERCEVAL GRAVES

WITH A PORTRAIT OF J. S. LE FANU



LONDON

DOWNEY & CO. LIMITED

12 YORK STREET, COVENT GARDEN

1896

WITH DOWNEY & CO
COMPLIMENT

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TO THE
LIBRARY OF

CONTENTS.

	PAGE
BEATRICE	I
DUAN NA CLAEV—THE LEGEND OF THE GLAIVE	87
SHAMUS O'BRIEN	113
PHAUDHRIG CROHOORE	12
MOLLY, MY DEAR	135
ABHAIN AU BHUIDEIL	137
SONG	143
MEMORY	145
THE STREAM	146
A DOGGREL IN A DORMANT-WINDOW . . .	148
APPENDIX	153



INTRODUCTION.



WHEN in the year 1880 I wrote a memoir of Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu, as a Preface to his "Purcell Papers," published by Bentley and Son, I was not aware that, besides being the author of the Irish poems contained in that collection of Irish stories and of the celebrated "Shamus O'Brien," Le Fanu had anonymously contributed half-a-dozen other poems to the *Dublin University Magazine* between the years 1863 and 1866 ; two of which, "The Legend of the Glaive," and "Beatrice," exhibit Le Fanu's genius in a new and unexpected light. They show him to have been capable of dramatic and lyrical creation on a distinctly higher plane than he had hitherto reached, although the forms in which the drama and the legend are cast are clearly experimental and not always successful. The same magnetic attributes of superhuman

mystery, grim or ghastly humour and diabolic horror which characterize the finest of his prose fictions meet us again. But these qualities are often conveyed with a finer touch, and at times with a directness of suggestion that is overwhelming. Again, the lurid terror of these narratives is happily relieved by interludes of such haunting beauty of colour and sound, that we cannot but lament the lateness of this discovery of his highest artistic self. Indeed, our literature can ill afford to lose lyrical drama with such a stamp of appalling power as is impressed on "Beatrice," or old-world idylls so full of Gaelic glamour as "The Legend of the Glaive." Their excellence has decided me to undertake the task of collecting and editing Le Fanu's poems. In its prosecution I have been encouraged and aided by Mr. Brinsley Le Fanu, the author's son, and his nephew, Mr. Thomas Le Fanu, and the publication of this volume practically completes the brilliant series of Le Fanu's works. Cordial acknowledgment is moreover due to the publishers, Messrs. Bentley and Edward Arnold, for

permission to incorporate in the introduction to this volume, extracts from Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu's "Purcell Papers," and William Le Fanu's "Seventy Years of Irish Life."

Le Fanu, as the readers of the "Purcell Papers," and more recently of "Seventy Years of Irish Life" by his brother, will know, showed unusual talent for verse as a boy of fifteen years of age, as witness these lines, in which, although the thought is evidently as secondhand as that pervading Tennyson's boyish lyrics, the medium of its expression is distinctly poetical.

"There is an hour of sadness all have known,
That weighs upon the heart we scarce know why;
We feel unfriended, cheerless and alone,
We ask no other pleasure but to sigh,
And muse on days of happiness gone by :
A painful, lonely pleasure which imparts
A calm regret, a deep serenity,
That soothes the rankling of misfortune's dart,
And kindly lends a solace even to broken hearts."

Young Le Fanu was naturally a student, and made good use of his father's excellent library,

But though of a dreamy and evidently unmethodical disposition, he had his wits about him when they were wanted, as the following anecdote chronicled by his brother will show :—

“One thing that much depressed the Dean was his habitually being late for prayers. One morning, breakfast was nearly over, and he had not appeared. My father, holding his watch in his hand, said in his severest tones, ‘I ask you, Joseph, I ask you seriously, is this right?’ ‘No, sir,’ said Joe, glancing at the watch, ‘I’m sure it must be fast.’”

This was an instance of precocious wit further exemplified by the brilliant piece of doggerel sent as a valentine to a very pretty Miss K—— a few years later, from which we may quote the following :—

“Your frown or your smile make me Savage or Gay
In action, as well as in song ;
And if ’tis decreed I at length become Gray,
Express but the word, and I’m Young.
And if in the Church I should ever aspire
With friars and abbots to cope,
By a nod, if you please, you can make me a Prior,
By a word you can render me Pope.

If you'd eat, I'm a Crabbe ; if you'd cut, I'm your
Steel,
As sharp as you'd get from the cutler ;
I'm your Cotton whene'er you're in want of a reel,
And your livery carry, as Butler."

He had also an early eye for a humorous situation, for on another occasion an elderly woman, whom he had never seen before and never saw after, looked at him as if she recognized him.

WOMAN.—"O then, Masther Richard, is that yerself?"

JOSEPH.—"Of course it is myself. Who else should I be?"

WOMAN.—"Ah, then, Masther Richard, it's proud I am to see you. I hardly knew you at first, you're grown so much. And how is the mistress and all the family?"

JOSEPH.—"All quite well, thank you. But why can't you ever come to see us?"

WOMAN.—"Ah, Masther Richard, don't you know I daren't face the house since that affair of the spoons?"

JOSEPH.—“ Don’t you know that is all forgotten and forgiven ?”

WOMAN.—“ If I knew that, I’d have been up to the house long ago.”

JOSEPH.—“ I’ll tell you what to do ; come up to dinner with the servants. You know the hour, and you will be surprised at the welcome you will get.”

WOMAN.—“ Well, please God, I will, Masther Richard.”

The tone of “ O’Donoghue,” an unfinished poem written at fifteen, and of his later “Irish National Ballads,” was due to his mother, who, as a girl, had been in her heart more or less of a rebel, and she, not the Dean, was the critic of his boyish verse. She told him of the hard fate which in ’98 befell many of those she knew and admired, including the brothers Sheares, and bequeathed to William Le Fanu a very interesting letter written, just before his execution, by John Sheares to her father, Dr. Dobbin, in which he defends himself from the charge of connivance at assassination for which he was about to suffer death. The character of

Sheares makes it impossible to doubt the truth of these his dying words. She told him much of Lord Edward FitzGerald and the fight he made for his life, and showed him the dagger with which he defended it. This dagger she possessed herself of, taking it surreptitiously from its owner, Major Swan, because, in her own words,—

“When I saw the dagger in the hands with which Lord Edward had striven in the last fatal struggle for life or death, I felt that it was not rightfully his who held it. I knew the spot in the front drawing-room where it was laid, and one evening I seized it, unobserved, and thrust it into my bosom; I returned to the company, where I had to sit for an hour. As soon as we got home I rushed up to the room which my sister and I occupied, and plunged it among the feathers of my bed, and for upwards of twelve years I lay every night upon the bed which contained my treasure.

“When I left home I took it with me, and it has been my companion in all the vicissitudes of life. When he missed it, Major Swan was greatly

incensed, and not without apprehension that it had been taken to inflict a deadly revenge upon him, but after a time his anger and uneasiness subsided."

At the age of twenty-five Le Fanu wrote the vigorous imitation of a street ballad bearing upon this subject which will be found on pages 160 and 161.

From the year 1826 to 1831 the Le Fanu family were on the most friendly terms with the peasantry in the neighbourhood of Abington, in the county of Limerick, the Dean of Emly being also Rector of Abington. To quote William Le Fanu's account:—"They appeared to be devoted to us; if we had been away for a month or two, on our return they met us in numbers some way from our home, took the horses from the carriage, and drew it to our house amid deafening cheers of welcome, and at night bonfires blazed on all the neighbouring hills. In all their troubles and difficulties the people came to my father for assistance. There was then no dispensary nor doctor near us, and many sick folk or their friends came daily to my mother for medicine

and advice ; I have often seen more than twenty with her of a morning. Our parish priest also was a special friend of ours, a constant visitor to our home. In the neighbouring parishes the same kindly relations existed between the priest and the flock and the Protestant clergyman. But in 1831 all this was suddenly and sadly changed, when the Tithe War came upon us."

A cousin of the Le Fanus, the Rev. Charles Coote, the Rector of the neighbouring parish of Doon, gave offence at the very commencement of the agitation by taking active measures to enforce the payment of his tithes. Wherever he or any of his family went they were received with opprobrium, and as frequent visitors to the Rectory at Doon, the Le Fanus soon came to be treated in a similar way.

Returning to Abingdon after a few years' absence, the young Le Fanus met on a steamboat, the *Garry Owen*, plying between Limerick and Kilrush, a famous character, one Paddy O'Neill, whose music and song, fiddling and playing on the

bagpipes cheered the passengers on the trip. He was, moreover, a poet, and sang his own songs to his own accompaniments.

As showing the friendly feeling again existing between Joseph and the peasants, his brother relates the following :—

“One summer evening my brother, who was a prime favourite of his, persuaded Paddy to drive across with him from Kilrush to Kilkee, and there they got up a dance in Mrs. Reade’s lodge, where some of our family were sojourning at the time ; I am sorry to say I was away at the time and missed the fun. The dance music was supplied by Paddy’s pipes and fiddle, and between the dances he sang some of his favourite songs. Next day my brother wrote some doggerel verses celebrating the dance” A copy was presented to the highly delighted Paddy, who, for years after, sang them with much applause to the passengers on the *Garry Owen*.

But as Le Fanu had seen the best side of Irish peasant life, he had also seen its worst. His

feelings as his mother's son prompted him to write "Shamus O'Brien"; his personal experiences during the Tithe War, drew him away from the people's side in politics. He was none the less "a good Irishman" in the National, not Nationalist, sense of that title.

Besides the poetical powers with which he was endowed, in common with his connections, the great Sheridan, the Dufferins, and the Hon. Mrs. Norton, Sheridan Le Fanu also possessed an irresistible humour and oratorical gift that, as a student of Old Trinity, made him a formidable rival of the best of the young debaters of his time at the "College Historical," not a few of whom eventually reached the highest eminence at the Irish Bar, after having long enlivened and charmed St. Stephen's by their wit and oratory.

Amongst his compeers he was remarkable for his sudden fiery eloquence of attack, and ready and rapid powers of repartee when on his defence. But Le Fanu, whose understanding was elevated by a deep love of the Classics, in which he took

University honours, and further heightened by an admirable knowledge of our own great authors, was not to be tempted away by oratory from literature, his first and, as it proved, his last love.

Very soon after leaving college, and just when he was called to the Bar, about the year 1841, he bought the *Warder*, a Dublin newspaper, of which he was editor, and took, what many of his best friends and admirers, looking to his high prospects as a barrister, regarded at the time as a fatal step in his career to fame.

Just before this period, Le Fanu had taken to writing humorous Irish stories, afterwards published in the *Dublin University Magazine*, such as the "Quare Gander," "Jim Sullivan's Adventure," "The Ghost and the Bone-setter," &c.

These stories his brother, William Le Fanu, was in the habit of repeating for his friends' amusement, and about the year 1837, when he was about twenty-three years of age, Joseph Le Fanu said to him that he thought an Irish story in verse would tell well, and that if he would choose him a

subject suitable for recitation, he would write him one. "Write me an Irish 'Young Lochinvar,'" said his brother, and in a few days he handed him "Phaudhrig Croohore"—*Anglice*, "Patrick Crohore."

Of course this poem has the disadvantage, not only of being written after "Young Lochinvar," but also that of having been directly inspired by it, and yet, although wanting in the rare and graceful finish of the original, the Irish copy has, we feel, so much fire and feeling, that it at least tempts us to regret that Scott's poem was not written in that heart-stirring Northern dialect, without which many of the noblest of our British ballads would lose half their spirit.

To return to the year 1837, Mr William Le Fanu, the suggester of this ballad, who was from home at the time, now received daily instalments of the second and more remarkable of his brother's Irish poems—"Shamus O'Brien" (James O'Brien)—learning them by heart as they reached him, and, fortunately, never forgetting them, for his brother Joseph kept no copy of the ballad, and he had him-

self to write it out from memory ten years after, when the poem appeared in the *Dublin University Magazine*.

Few will deny that this poem contains passages most faithfully, if fearfully, picturesque, and that it is characterized throughout by a profound pathos and an abundant humour. Can we wonder then at the immense popularity with which Samuel Lover recited it in the United States? For to Lover's admiration of the poem, and his addition of it to his entertainment, "Shamus O'Brien" owes its introduction into America, where it is now so popular. Lover added some lines of his own to the poem, made Shamus emigrate to the States, and set up a public-house. These added lines appeared in most of the published versions of the ballad, but they are indifferent as verse, and certainly injure the dramatic effect of the poem.

"Shamus O'Brien" is so generally attributed to Lover (indeed, we remember seeing it advertised for recitation on the occasion of a benefit at a leading London theatre as "by Samuel Lover")

that it is a satisfaction to be able to reproduce the following letter upon the subject from Lover to William Le Fanu :—

“ASTOR HOUSE,

“NEW YORK, U.S. AMERICA.

“*September 30th, 1846.*

“MY DEAR LE FANU,—

“In reading over your brother's poem while I crossed the Atlantic, I became more and more impressed with its great beauty and dramatic effect, so much so that I determined to test its effect in public, and have done so here, on my first appearance, with the greatest success. Now, I have no doubt there will be great praises of the poem, and people will suppose most likely that the composition is mine, and as you know (I take for granted) that I would not wish to wear a borrowed feather, I should be glad to give your brother's name as the author, should he not object to have it known ; but as his writings are often in so different a tone, I would not speak without permission to do so. It is true that in my programme my name is attached to other pieces, and no name appended to the recitation. So far, you will see I have done all

I could to avoid 'appropriating'—the spirit of which I might have caught here with Irish aptitude ; but I would like to have the means of telling all whom it may concern the name of the author, to whose head and heart it does so much honour. Pray, my dear Le Fanu, inquire, and answer me here by next packet, or as soon as convenient. My success here has been quite triumphant.

“Yours very truly,

“SAMUEL LOVER.”

The outlaw Kirby, who was “on his keeping” (i.e. hiding from the police) at the time of his family's residence in County Limerick, evidently suggested much of the devil-may-care character of “Shamus O'Brien” to Le Fanu. With a price upon his head, owing to his connection with agrarian outrages, Kirby could not resist the temptation of going to a hunt or a coursing match, narrowly escaping capture on some of these occasions.

An informer, learning that Kirby would be at his mother's house one Sunday night, communicated the fact to Major Vokes, of Limerick, the most active magistrate in the south of Ireland, who had

more than once been baffled in his efforts to capture the outlaw.

Old Mrs. Kirby was in bed when the Major and two constables drew up to the door, but, fortunately, her daughter, Mary, had gone to a wake in the neighbourhood, and stayed out all night. Kirby, who was sitting by the fire, his pistols on a table beside him, sprang to his feet, and seizing them, cried, "At any rate, I'll have the life of one of them before I'm taken." "Whisht ! you fool," said his mother. "Here, be quick ! put on Mary's cap, take your pistols with you, jump into bed, turn your face to the wall, and lave the rest to me."

He was scarcely in bed when there was a loud knocking at the door, which his mother, having lit a rush, opened as quickly as possible. In came Major Vokes and the constables. "Where is your son ?" said Vokes. "Plaze God, he's far enough from ye. It's welcome yez are this night," she said. "And thanks to the Lord it wasn't yesterday ye came, for it's me and Mary *there* that strove to make him stop the night wid us ; but, thank God,

he was afraid." They searched the house, but did not like to disturb the young girl in bed, and finding nothing, went, sadly disappointed, back to Limerick. The news of Kirby's escape soon spread through the country. Vokes was much chaffed, but Kirby never slept another night in his mother's house.

This incident, which is summarized from his brother's book, does not occur in Le Fanu's "Shamus," but Mr. Jessop has seized the situation, and indeed improved upon it, for his libretto of the opera of "Shamus O'Brien" by Dr. Stanford, which has recently been received with such pronounced popularity.

It is not as easy to see how the song, "I'm a young man that never yet was daunted," quoted by Mr. W. Le Fanu in his "Irish Recollections," suggested to his brother the plot of "Shamus O'Brien," beyond that it describes, though incoherently enough, the doings of an outlaw, who breaks gaol at Nenagh, and gets off scot-free after knocking down the sentry.

Le Fanu's literary life may be divided into three distinct periods. During the first of these, and till his thirtieth year, he was an Irish ballad, song, and story writer, his first published story being the "Adventures of Sir Robert Ardagh," which appeared in the *Dublin University Magazine* in 1838.

In 1844 he was united to Miss Susan Bennett, the beautiful daughter of the late George Bennett, Q.C. From this time until her decease in 1858, he devoted his energies almost entirely to press work, making, however, his first essays in novel writing during that period. The "Cock and Anchor," a chronicle of old Dublin city, his first and, in the opinion of competent critics, one of the best of his novels, seeing the light about the year 1850. "Torlogh O'Brien" was its immediate successor. Their comparative want of success when first published, seems to have deterred Le Fanu from using his pen, except as a press writer, until 1863, when the "House by the Churchyard" was published, and was soon followed by "Uncle Silas," and other well-known novels. Finally, Le Fanu

published in the pages of the *Dublin University Magazine*, "Beatrice" and "The Legend of the Glaive," revised editions of which form the specially notable feature in this volume of his poems.

Those who possessed the rare privilege of Le Fanu's friendship, and only they, can form any idea of the true character of the man ; for after the death of his wife, to whom he was most deeply devoted, he quite forsook general society, in which his fine features, distinguished bearing, and charm of conversation marked him out as the beau-ideal of an Irish wit and scholar of the old school.

From this society he vanished so entirely, that Dublin, always ready with a nickname, dubbed him "The Invisible Prince," and, indeed, he was for long almost invisible, except to his family and most familiar friends, unless at odd hours of the evening, when he might occasionally be seen stealing, like the ghost of his former self, between his newspaper office and his home in Merrion Square. Sometimes, too, he was to be encountered in an old, out-of-the-

way bookshop, poring over some rare black letter Astrology or Demonology.

To one of these old bookshops he was at one time a pretty frequent visitor, and the bookseller relates how he used to come in and ask with his peculiarly pleasant voice and smile, "Any more ghost stories for me, Mr. —?" and how, on a fresh one being handed to him, he would seldom leave the shop until he had looked it through. This taste for the supernatural seems to have grown upon him after his wife's death, and influenced him so deeply that, had he not been possessed of a deal of shrewd common sense, there might have been danger of his embracing some of the visionary doctrines in which he was so learned. But no! even Spiritualism, to which not a few of his brother novelists succumbed, whilst affording congenial material for our artist of the superhuman to work upon, did not escape his severest satire.

Shortly after completing his last novel, strange to say, bearing the title "Willing to Die," Le Fanu

breathed his last at his home, No. 18, Merrion Square South, at the age of fifty-nine.

“He was a man,” writes the author of a brief memoir of him in the *Dublin University Magazine*, “who thought deeply, especially on religious subjects. To those who knew him he was very dear ; they admired him for his learning, his sparkling wit and pleasant conversation, and loved him for his manly virtues, for his noble and generous qualities, his gentleness, and his loving, affectionate nature.” And all who knew the man must feel how deeply deserved are these simple words of sincere regard for Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu.

ALFRED PERCEVAL GRAVES.

RED BRANCH HOUSE,

WIMBLEDON,

June 6th, 1896.

BEATRICE.

A VERSE DRAMA IN TWO ACTS.

ACT I.—PROLOGUE.

IN Venice, in the Sala del Maggior Consiglio, in the Ducal Palace, in the series of the Doges' portraits, occurs a blank space with this inscription :—" Hic est locus Marini Falieri, decapitati pro criminibus." His half-brother Andrea Faliero, suspected but not convicted of complicity in his treason, suffered the confiscation of all his lands and goods, and a sentence, under pain of death to remain within the liberties of Venice. His noble wife died soon after, in a convent ; and he, with his infant daughter, repaired to the island of Torcello, where working in his boat as a fisherman, he maintained himself to his death. His daughter Beatrice having been, by a strange adventure, lost to him in her sixteenth year, he left none on earth of his name and lineage.

Palazzo on the Canale Grande.

CHORUS.

Sad night is o'er the city of the Isles,
And o'er a palace that amid her glooming

With a radiant halo smiles,
While music from its windows booming
Floats the voice of masque and measure
Through distant domes and marble piles,
And hymns the jubilee of youth and pleasure.

Between the ripple dimly plashing,
And the dark roof looming high,
Lost in the funereal sky,
Like many-coloured jewels flashing,
Small lamps in loops and rosaries of fire,
Verdant and blood-red, trembling, turning—
Yellow and blue—in the deep water burning,
From dark till dawning
Illumine all the wide concave,
And splash and stain the marble and the wave.

From balconies in air,
Th' emblazoned silken awning
Flows like a lazy sail ;
And gondoliers down there,
And masks upon the stair,
Hear music swelling o'er them like a gale.

Italian grace and gaiety,
And silver-bearded policy,
Princes and soldiers, sage and great,
The craft and splendour of the State,
Proud dames, and Adria's fair daughters,
The sirens of Venetian waters,
Beautiful as summer dreams
Dreamed in haunted forest glade,
By silvery streams in leafy gleams,
Floating through the awful shade.

The noble palace peopled was right meetly,
And in its wide saloons the dance went featly,
And high above the hum
Swelled the thunder and the hoot
Of theorbo and viol, of the hautboy and the
flute,
And the roaring of the drum.

SCENE.

*A room in the same Palazzo, apart from the
Masques and Dancers.*

[*Young JULIO CONTARINI, leaning against a
pillar, looks sadly through the window, his
arms folded and his mask in his hand.*]

FRANCESCO CORNARO.—Old Andrea Aldini, dead
at last !

Some pretty portraits and originals,
Ha, ha ! have lost a master. Died this evening
About sunset.

JULIO.— One old fool less in Venice.

FRANCESCO.—Nay, he'll be missed,—missed at the
Faro table.

Ha, ha, ha ! Missed at other places too.
Made all he could of life—no fool, think I—
Eat his peach to the stone—ah, ha !

JULIO.— Play out

The game ! still, where the flowers and music
were,

Linger, in deepening solitude and shadow,
And see the last lamp out ?

FRANCESCO.— Per Bacco ! yes.

Bravo ! Amen, say I !

JULIO.— The revel o'er,

Good bye ! glide out, and home, and come no
more—

Gape under fathoms of oblivion—

Turn up no more, save for a year or two,

In young men's jibing talk ?

FRANCESCO.— Each has his turn.

JULIO.—The moon is low already. The sky, how
clear ;

The stars blink strangely.

FRANCESCO.— 'Twill be sultry weather.

JULIO (*looking to the sky*).—Up there's a mighty
allegory.

FRANCESCO.—Ay, sir, for lovers and astrologers.

But wherefore here, signor ? The dancers miss
you.

JULIO.—I miss not them.

FRANCESCO.—Come, come, you are no cynic.

Music and tread of dancers in the ear—

Come ! this is life !

JULIO.— And life's a bitter pill.

FRANCESCO.—Pish ! affectation ! come ! It is enchanting.

JULIO.—Hear—see—wonder—how beautiful it is !
The sneering laughter—whispered lust—pastiles—
And drilled musicians — wax-lights — rustling silks—

Better the scent of wild flowers on the air,
The tune of nightingales and ring of waves,
And simple love under the kind, cold moon.
I'm tired.

FRANCESCO.— And so am I.

JULIO.— Of me ? I'm going.

FRANCESCO.—What ! going ?

JULIO.— Ay, Francesco, cap and mantle,
Going.

FRANCESCO.—To moonlight and to simple love ?

JULIO.—I like to be alone—I choose to think.

FRANCESCO.—I could say where—ha ! But I must not tease.

JULIO.—Ay, amen ! To the devil if you please—

To Pluto, signor, so I go alone.

Farewell, Francesco.

FRANCESCO.— Fare ye well. He's gone.

[*Exit* JULIO.

SCENE.

*The open sea near Venice. JULIO is seen alone in
his gondola rowing slowly,*

CHORUS.

Here we hover, here we trace
Contarini's wondrous grace,
As across the mirror wide,
Like a phantom of the tide,
Boat and hero silent glide,
Sweeping slowly, far from shore,
Darkest sea with flashing oar—
In that shadow, in that beam,
Now behold him like a dream.

Dark locks, many a curling fold,
Such as young Antinous wore,
Touched with lights of misty gold,

Softly throw their shadow o'er
A broad low brow with pride o'erfraught—
Brow like ivory sculptor-wrought
Into beauteous curves of thought ;
Oval face of Moorish tint,
Features well-nigh feminine,
Chiselled with a touch so fine,
So exquisite in every line ;
Pencilled eyebrow, dreamy lash,
Carmine lip, with dark moustache,
And haughty smile of pearly glint.

Soft as night, those eyes of his,
Gloomed with shadows of the abyss ;
Eyes of darkness, large and deep,
Where fires unfathomed play and sleep—
Sometimes drowsed in haughty dreams,
Sometimes flaming cold and wild,
They've with fatal purpose smiled,
Or darkly glowed with passion's gleams.

What their colour, what their light ?
Canst thou fix the hues of night,

Or colour of the thunder cloud
Wherefrom the lightning leaps?
Or as the wave beneath the steeps
Where midnight blackness broods and sleeps,
Into hidden moonlight dashes,
Into sudden splendour flashes—
And swallowed straight in blacker night
Blinds the gazer's dazzled sight.

SCENE.

The Island of Torcello. Moonlight.

[The fisherman's casement from the rocks and myrtles above, overlooking the water; the light of a lamp shines from it; a flight of stone steps leads down to the water from the door of the building.]

[Julio's gondola; he ceases rowing and gazes.]

JULIO.—How pretty this ! the waters seek
So wooingly this bosky creek ;
How lovingly the moonlight falls
On leafy cliff and cottage walls !

How all its peaks and edges glimmer,
And all its myrtles softly shimmer,
Rear'd of shadows and of light,
Sweet creation of the night !
From the rock's projecting crest,
Venturous as a martlet's nest,
The cot o'erhangs the water's breast.
Nets are clinging on the wall,
Spars and tackle loosely lie,
And the patched boat high and dry,
Gaff and anchor rusted all ;
O'er the waters softly swelling,
This thread of light, so pure and shy,
Seaward slanting from on high,
Glimmers from a fisher's dwelling.

*(The casement opens, and BEATRICE, expecting her
father's return, sings a hymn.)*

Hush ! oh ye billows,
Hush ! oh thou wind,
Watch o'er us, angels,
Mary, be kind !

Fishermen followed
The steps of the Lord ;
Oft in their fishing boats
Preached He the Word.

Pray for us, Pietro,
Pray for us, John,
Pray for us, Giacomo,
Zebedee's son.

If it be stormy,
Fear not the sea ;
Jesus upon it
Is walking by thee.

Billows be gentle,
Soft blow the wind,
Watch o'er us, angels,
Mary, be kind !

(The voice ceases.)

JULIO.—Sure never voice so wildly sweet
Did the ear of listener greet.

(Sings, answering her.)

Soft be the billows,
Gentle the wind,
Angels watch over thee,
Mary, be kind !

(BEATRICE comes to the casement, and looks out timidly in the light of the lamp.)

JULIO.—By heaven ! she is a pretty creature ;
What a charm in every feature !

BEATRICE.—That is not my father's boat,
Nor Leonardo's voice.

JULIO *(to himself)*.— I vote
We try a stave, for Cupid's wings
Waft music as they fly. She sings !

BEATRICE *(singing)*.—If thou be'st honest,
Stretch to thy oar,
Give thee good night, friend,
Come here no more.

(She closes the casement and goes back, the lamp still burning.)

JULIO.— Angels and fairest saints of heaven !

Elysian dream !

Oh ! could I deem

So beautiful a face,

So sweet and sad a grace

To mortal ever given !

If I be honest ?—ay, amen !

I will be honest, so you come again.

I'll watch and listen for a glance,

Or song—and pray to Venus or to Chance.

I'd count the watches of the long night o'er

To hear or see thee, wondrous maid, once more.

*(Folds his cloak about him ; and, resting his cheek
upon his hand, watches the casement from which
issues the ray of the lamp, but in vain—she
comes not again.)*

(He sings).

A siren once her sea-girt home

With wild notes haunting,

Her spell upon the wingèd foam

And breezes chanting,

By moonlight, as he floated near,
With a sweet madness thrall'd the ear
Of a lonely gondolier.

While he listens, while he dreams,
On billows rocking,
Sweeter every moment seems
That siren's mocking.
Other song will ne'er be dear,
Or singer to the heart or ear
Of that lonely gondolier.

Shadowed by that listening isle,
By her enchanted,
Her charm and music still beguile
His senses haunted.
And if that Spirit, strangely dear,
Will sing no more, no more appear,
Dies that lonely gondolier.

(Listening within, her finger to her lip.)

BEATRICE.—Who can be the gondolier,
Whom I see not, only hear ?

What can he want, the saucy youth?

“Appear” and “sing,” not I, in truth.

(A pause.)

His voice was wondrous sweet and clear.

(As he in his boat slowly recedes, JULIO sings again.)

JULIO.—A siren once her sea-girt home

With wild notes haunting,

Her spell upon the wingèd foam

And breezes chanting,

By moonlight, as he floated near,

With a sweet madness thrallèd the ear

Of a lonely gondolier.

(The notes die away in the increasing distance.

She listens for some time.)

BEATRICE.—And so the foolish dream is done;

I'm glad the saucy fellow's gone.

(A pause.)

Glad, too, he lighted here by night,

He'll never find it in daylight.

Yes, glad—right glad—he'll come no more.

(Listens for a longer time.)

And so, the foolish dream is o'er,

'Tis very well—it was not meet,

(Another pause as she listens vainly. She sighs.

And the song was wondrous sweet !

(Opens the casement and looks out. A pause.)

Quite gone—I'm glad—it was too bold.

(A pause.)

And yet the song was passing sweet !

Thou tuneful gondolier ! whom sight

Of mine shall ne'er behold ;

For thy sweet song—good-night !

(She closes the casement.)

SCENE.

The Island of Torcello. Sunset. The fisherman's dwelling as before.

[BEATRICE *in the casement, pensive, leaning on her hand.*]

CHORUS.

There she sits with sea-gray eyes

Gazing o'er the sea,

In sunset dreams, beneath the skies
That dreamlike flash and flee.
And floats there in the fading light
A tender thought of yesternight ?
Steals there the cold air along
A phantom echo of that song,
From the region ghostly high,
From the land of memory,
Where all things live that seem to die ?

Slowly shifting into rest,
Like the vapours of the west,
In many a hue and fold,
Moves her saddened reverie,
Whose moods may thus be told.

THE REVERIE OF BEATRICE.

The sea-breeze wakens clear and cold
Over the azure wide ;
Before his breath in threads of gold
The ruddy ripples glide,
And racing for the shingle

Their crystal chimes commingle,
As silver bells
In Paduan dells
From flying fleeces tingle.

O rising of the winds, O flow of the waves !
And the murmurous music of cliffs and caves,
And the billows that travel so far to die
In foam, on the loved shore where they lie.
I lean my cold cheek on my hand,
And as a child, with wide-set eyes,
Listens in a dim surprise
To some high story
Of grief and glory
It cannot surely understand ;
Like that awed child,
To the Adriatic music wild
I listen, in a rapture lonely,
Not understanding, guessing only,
Its golden meaning not for me ;
Letting my fancies come and go,
And fall and flow,
With the eternal singing sea.

The gondola of JULIO CONTARINI is seen approaching ; it glides into the wooded creek. He is disguised as a minstrel, and, standing in the boat, lifts his cap.)

JULIO.—Donna in that casement high,
Wilt thou brook my minstrelsy ;
Shall I sing—or may I try ?

BEATRICE.—And what art thou ?

JULIO.— A gondolier,
Who can make music if thou'lt hear ;
A wandering minstrel, who will sing
For a *baiocco*, anything.

BEATRICE.—(*Aside*) 'Tis he. It is that voice so clear.
(*Aloud*) If my father find thee here,
Stranger, it will cost thee dear.

JULIO.—What guerdon can I pay too dear
For the chance of being here,
Such as thou art stealing near ?

BEATRICE.—(*Aside*) I'll hear him sing—I'm surely
right—

'Twas he who sang but yesternight !

(*Aloud*) There's a *baiocco*—so—let's hear

A song about a gondolier
And a sea-nymph singing near.
Have you none such ?

From the window she throws the coin, which he, receiving, pierces with a blow of his dagger-point, and kissing it, attaches it to a golden chain that he draws from under his "tabárro," and replaces next his heart. Beatrice laughs.)

JULIO.—Her laughter sweeter is than singing—
How cheerily it thrills !
Running music in its rills—
How sparkling and how ringing.
Laugh on, laugh on, thou lovely one.

BEATRICE.—And how, sir, could I choose but
smile

When I saw a coin so vile
Hung upon a golden chain,
Within a tabard to remain,
Like a relic or an order !
Could Paliaccio aught absurder ?

(She laughs again.)

JULIO.—(*Sings*) The gift the gondolier has gained,
Dropped by her so laughingly,
A talisman until he die,
Worshipped with a kiss and sigh,
By her is yet disdained.

The folly she disdained,
If yet a folly, is a sign
Of a madness half divine—
Thine the cause, the madness mine !
And yet it is disdained.

The folly she disdained !
Oh ! like the heart he laid it to,
The homely coin is metal true,
And like his heart is wounded through,
And like his heart is chained.

BEATRICE.—Signor, thou art no gondolier—
No golden chains such people wear.
Oh ! why didst thou come here ?

JULIO.—As a spirit cannot sleep,
Cannot stay, but from the deep

Rises at a spell,

So, enchantress, here am I.

BEATRICE.—Ay, here thou art, but why

And who?

JULIO.—Who? it matters not to tell.

And why?—'Tis loving thee so well

BEATRICE.—In an old ballad I have read

What flatteries a gallant said,

And turned a maiden's foolish head.

JULIO.—If thou knewest in my strange wooing,

In this voyage of my love,

How near I sail to my undoing,

By my Guardian Saint above!

I swear thou wouldst believe my love.

BEATRICE.—Art thou, then, that gondolier

Who last night was singing here;

Tell me ere we part?

JULIO.—I am, indeed, that gondolier,

And thou that fatal siren art.

CHORUS.

And so the self-same way,

From day to day;

Sometimes in blithesome morn,
Sometimes by twilight lorn,
Or when the red sun braves
 Westward the blazing sea,
Floating on a sky of waves—
Or in night's lonely noon,
When wide in starlight quivers the lagoon—
He, like a vision, came and went,
Or as sweet music surges and is spent.
Visits made in mystery,
Suddenness and secrecy,
For he knew his father's pride,
Ere Beatrice should be his bride,
Would lay her dead beneath the tide.

SCENE.

The same, on the next evening. JULIO and

BEATRICE conversing as before.

JULIO.—And does thy father, all the year,
 He and thy mother still live here?

BEATRICE.—My mother's dead—

JULIO.— Oh! is she dead?

What has my careless folly said
I would not stir one grief in thee
For all the treasures on the sea.

BEATRICE.—Not grief, but joy for evermore

That she to death is wed.
We say they die who go before,
'Tis we who stay are dead.
The earth her mouldering image shrouds,
But robed above the golden clouds,
She lifts adoring hands and eyes
To God, all glorious, good, and wise ;
And with the angels white and high
She walks the flooring of the sky—
With crown of light,
In robe of white,
Where rolls the chant of victory.

CHORUS.

He *knew* what *she* knew not, the story
Of her lineage and its fall—
Of Faliero's ancient glory—
Of the Treason and the fall.

Little dared he to her tell,
But she came to like him well ;
And from her rocky city citadel,
Above the waters' sway and swell,
To him she would the simple love
Of all her innocent life run o'er.

SCENE.

The same by moonlight, some nights later.

[BEATRICE *relating to* JULIO *how with her father and* LEONARDO, *she sailed in the fishing boat to visit the convent where her mother is buried.*]

BEATRICE.—They lifted me down from the giddy
plank

Into the boat that rose and sank :
The eager sails that rattle and slap
With thundering flap,
At a turn of the tiller filled at last,
And stooped the mast
As the wet rope raced through the mooring
ring.

On the mad waves their boat was free ;

And like a wild-bird on the wing,
With sudden dive and soaring swing,
Still bending with the breeze away,
Away she swept on the laughing sea
'Mong waves and romping wind and spray.

Away the dancing island goes,
The sleeping headland dipt and rose,
The billows, that wild creatures be
Of the hearty and wondrous sea,
In sport and power
Welcome the boat with snort and splash
And riotous dash,
And hail of foamy shower.
High, spring high
Surge in your roaring glee
Fly, foam, fly !
And whirling mist of the sea !

The gusty wind be-stunned my ear
And drenched with pelting brine my hair ;
Delightful were to me
The frown and the flash of the billows free

And the swell of the breezy sea !
Laughing with tremulous fear and delight
Salt on my cheek and salt on my lips ;
With the joyful grips of my finger-tips
I held the oozy gunwale tight.
When on the shore she furled her wing
How beautiful was everything !
Upon the mountain, sun and shade,
A splendour drowned in darkness made,
Purple and gold all blurred and barred ;
And fluttering wild flowers' flashing sheen,
Blue, argent, crimson, round were starred,
Like fairy fires beneath the green ;
Oh ! sweet was all I saw to me,
And all I heard an ecstasy !

The winsome wind in all its moods,
The warble and the coo of woods,
The darkened sward and fragrant air,
The massy vault, the dripping well,
Whose darksome drops in music fell
Like gliding beads of murmured prayer.

Where cypresses and long grass wave,
A young nun took me by the hand,
And passing many a grave,
With a sweet sadness softly said,
“ Here, little girl, thy mother’s laid ;
Oh, sister, pray that I
As well may live, as happy die.”
She looked on the grave with a gentle sigh,
I often think she wished to die ;
And for these words so kind and sweet
I could have knelt and kissed her feet.
She was so young, that though a child,
I felt she clung to me ;
Sad was her face and never smiled,
Yet smiling seemed to be.

And oft when pale the evening skies,
And fading hues and outlines swim,
When stars are soft and waves grow dim,
That pretty lady’s deep gray eyes
In twilight hours before me rise.

While homeward sailed our boat before

The sweet air blowing from the shore,
I silent gazed the gunwale o'er
On all that glided from my view,
The darkening trees and gables gray,
While our boat swept moaning through
The waters of the bay.

While like a voice of other years
Returning in a dream,
So far, so sweet, and sad it fell
And moving, why I could not tell,
With its mysterious harmonies,
And faint remembered memories,
The fountain of my tears ;
From the gray belfry o'er the trees
Glided down the summer breeze
The grave note of the bell.

CHORUS.

And when the low farewell was spoken,
And when her light was gone,
And when the spell and dream were broken
And sea and sky were lone,

Looking 'twixt the sea and sky
With desert gaze and weary sigh,
She holds communion with her soul.
And thus, alone, debateth she,—
“ A worker of mosaic, he ;
Or a carver fine, maybe,
Of those charmèd heads and flowers,
Snakes and birds in marble bowers
I have pondered o'er for hours ?
And does he love me as he says ?
Or—are his ways like others' ways ?
And will my hero come to-morrow—
Will he come again ?
Oh ! why is love so like a sorrow —
Hope so nearly pain ? ”
All on her hand she laid her head ;
And with these thoughts her young brain rife,
Light slumber o'er her little bed
Winged away her waking care ;
But quiet days for her were fled ;
Without him sea and sky were dead ;
And before she was aware,
He grew the music of her life.

ACT II.

CHORUS.

A lovely Queen, her life laid down,
Lies here in splendid state ;
Upon her temples cold, the crown
Shows strangely fair and great.
Her lieges come, her lieges go,
And early pass, and late,
To look upon her, fallen so
From her high estate.
Beneath the starry tapers greeted
By the frozen eyes,
Where darkly in the coffin sheeted
The glimmering pallor lies—
They see the lines of beauty rule,
Where all its glow is ended,
Corruption that is beautiful,
And sadness that is splendid.

In marble beauty night and day,
E'en thus was Venice seen ;
Thus in the death of spirit lay
The Adriatic queen.

Man upon his journey hies—
A chequered course and variable,
Walking through life as he is shown
By gleams through yawning darkness thrown—
By lights that fall from Paradise,
And hues that cross from hell.

Can we read his words or ways ?
Whence he acts, or whereto thinks ?
A vapour changing as we gaze,
An utterance of the sphinx.
Still the man our judgment baulks.
Good is he ? or, is he evil ?
At his right an Angel walks,
At his left a Devil.

Beside that beauty dead and cold,
With word of power and vengeful hand,

I smite the coffin with my wand ;
As Death and Sin thou workest there.
Rise up, thou living monster old,
Reveal thy presence in the air !

SCENE.

*A gorgeous chamber in the Palazzo of NEROEA
overlooking the Canal. NEROEA alone.*

CHORUS.

An icy fear and rapture dread
Ravish the heart and warn the head !
This Wonder is no mortal Lemn,
Spirit of the starry host—
Lais—Cleopatra's ghost—
Saddest angel—fairest Demon !
Lo ! all human beauties, paling
In her lovely splendour, wane.
'Tis some antique dream exhaling
From the dead Apelles' brain !

Fell beauty !—Love akin to hate,
Indolent and coy she sate :
Loose her girdle o'er her hips—
Luxury in every wile—
A mystic pain—a loving guile,
The scarlet scorn of cruel lips,
The pearly danger of her smile—
Her downward smile and glance oblique
Evil—yet Madonna-like !
Her girlish bosom's waving swell,
Her cheek's shy dimple, like the play
Of waters darkling in a well,
Lure not a lover but a prey.
In all her lithe limbs' modulations,
In the proud fulness of her throat,
In all her throbbing undulations,
The sorceries of beauty float.

Light at every stir up-throwing,
At every stir new marvels showing,
With enamelled pictures glowing,
Diamond-set and golden-chased,

Heroes of Venetian story,
In loose chains of linked medallions,
Loop the lithe round of her waist—
Riches floated here in galleons,
China silk and webs of gold
Round her throw an orient glory.
Green and crimson jewels burning
Glare and vanish at each turning,
Flash and vanish in each fold ;
As the fiery eyes of snakes
Glide through nooks of flowery brakes,
Glare and vanish in each fold.

She was a deep thought of the Muse,
Whom canvas, marble, words refuse :
Striving what she was to tell
Is but a yearning and farewell—
And so—mute as first it rose,
The vision brief and broken,
With me to darkness goes
Unspoken—
But softly as an Orient Saint

Shadowed on a holy floor,
On memory that thrill and taint
Will smile and burn for evermore.

Who enters? Lo!

Passing phantom-like the door
A silent Monk stands on the floor.
Is he anchorite or devil?
High and gaunt this form of evil
Gliding noiselessly has sought her,
As a shadow on the water.
Marble-like beneath his cowl
Gleams the curve of his anguine scowl,
The broad cold eyes—that greenly stare,
And ever seem to search and smile,
And find in all things something vile—
Like insult and pollution scare.
She did not mean to greet him here—
She rose as people rise in fear.
He stood there in his garment sooty,
She stood gleaming in her glory,

Face to face, like Death and Beauty,
In a painted allegory.

(A pause, during which she gazes on him.)

NEROEAE.—How camest thou here ?

SPALATRO.— Your signoria's order.

NEROEAE.—I know thee not.

SPALATRO.— Lady, thou know'st me not.

And yet,

Lady, thou know'st me well.

NEROEAE.— Who called thee hither ?

SPALATRO.—Giacopo.

NEROEAE. Then thou art—

SPALATRO.— Fra Spalatro.

NEROEAE.—Hast thou a sign ?

SPALATRO.— Thy ring, signora ! Take it.

NEROEAE.—Ha ! yes, I've heard. Be frank with
me—fear nothing.

SPALATRO.—I fear nothing.

NEROEAE.— Nor I. Listen. My lover—

My noble lover—by a base girl cozened

SPALATRO.—Alas ! Alas !

NEROEAE.— By a base hussy in
A fisher's cot—

SPALATRO.— Insufferably queer !

NEROEAE.—My own—mine always—for a year and
more—

Mine passionately—till—of late—and now—

(She pauses.)

SPALATRO.—And now is cooling? Thine—and—
some one else's ?

What can I do ?

NEROEAE.— What canst thou do ? Well, sir ?

SPALATRO.—A philtre ?

NEROEAE.— No.

SPALATRO.— Find out who is the rival ?

NEROEAE.—I know it.

SPALATRO.—By my art inform thee how
'Twill end ?

NEROEAE.—Come, come. Can thine art do no
more ?

SPALATRO.—Many things.

NEROEAE.— Name them.

SPALATRO.— I would first know, lady
What thou requir'st.

NEROEAE.— Why fear'st thou to say all,
If thou mean'st all ?

SPALATRO.— We all are cowards, lady.

NEROEAE.—Cowards ? Thou sayest thou fearest
nothing.

SPALATRO.—Nothing—nothing ! never ! so long
as I am safe.

NEROEAE.—Safe—and thy trade ?

SPALATRO.— Safe—because, being wise,
I am a coward ; being coward—safe.

NEROEAE.—Go on.

SPALATRO.— Oh ! not before your ladyship.

NEROEAE.—Thy life is in my hand.

(SPALATRO *smiles, and bows very low.*)

Is poison sure

As witchcraft, villain ? Ay, I've said it—speak !

SPALATRO.—Some people think it surer—that is
all.

NEROEAE.—Go on.

SPALATRO.—I follow—rather—step by step.

NEROEAE.—Go on.

SPALATRO.— Nay, not before your ladyship.

NEROEAE.—What? By St. Mark, wilt hold thy
peace! Shall I

Play tempter to the Fiend, and drop again
Into his hollow ear his damned suggestion,
And wring my heart in syllables of terror,
That thou may'st smile? Gaunt blasphemy,
away!

And elsewhere, saint-like, cowl thy murderous
head,

And look like hell, and smile, and smell of death.

Oh God! Why did I call thee here?

(NEROEAE *passes through the curtain to the balcony.*)

SPALATRO.—

Brava!

Ever the same. They'd murder prettily.

For *us*, the danger and the mire of murder;

For them its profit and romance. Is't so?

Yea, by my soul! Thou'lt put thy dainty hand
to't,

Beautiful Cannibal! I know thy kind.

None of thine airs with me! I seat me here.

She'll come back presently in her right mind ;
And at my feet, a penitent—henceforth
Sit gentle, and as she ought to be, afraid.

SCENE.

*The balcony; NEROEA alone, leaning over it.
Moonlight.*

NEROEA.—Ah ! ha, ha ha ! Thank God ! The
air, the moonlight.

Oh ! cooling floods, pour drowning o'er the fire
Of my hot temples, and my wild heart's bounds
Against this close-ribbed cage. Away, away !
To die is better. Stars !—cold eyes of heaven
That wake and look and wake and never feel,
Is there no pity ? Spirits ! angels !—nothing,
No pity ? Is there duty, truth, or peace ?
Cares the great God for me or what I do ?
Is there peace anywhere ? tremendous God !
Is time, from birth to death an agony ?
Were I a god, I could not deal in riddles ;
And with unreal lights and voices scare

Poor creatures, starless, on a waste benighted.
The boatman's daughter ?—the boatman's innocent daughter ?—

That drowned herself for love. I've thought of her

For many a day. How beautiful she looked !
And God is truth they say. She could not be
Unhappy, sure, and look so like an Angel !
And to my aunt I said, " Preach as they may,
'Tis well—that girl did right—the girl's in
heaven ! "

My poor aunt at her prayers—good, narrow soul,
So cold, and I—God makes us differently—
So reptile-cold some—some of fire—all fire !
The fire—the worm—the worm that dieth not—
The fire—the fire. And I who said she was
In heaven ; that she did right—lo ! here am I,
All lost for him ! and he all lost to me—
And here am I, and there the dark sea sleeps.
'Twas in the night she did it. What am I ?
She dared it, all alone, poor soul ! From night
To darker night, so easy—and I dare not.

How black it looks, that blind, remorseless mirror.
Oh, death ! Oh, death ! Oh anodyne appalling !
Once quaffed, then cold for ever ! I'm no more
The brave girl I once was—a coward grown.
I that was once so brave ; yet if I live,
She cannot—no, she cannot. Fool ! she cannot.

SCENE.

*The same gorgeous chamber in the Palazzo of
NEROEIA, overlooking the canal.*

*[An hour later. Fra SPALATRO, smiling, his hand
on the door at which he stands. NEROEIA, pale
and seated near a lamp, looking sternly at
him.]*

SPALATRO.—*Now*, madam, all is clear. No oracles.
Each understands the other. It shall be—
Ay it shall come to pass, not by my hand,
But by a sure one, lady.

NEROEIA.— There, there, there—go !

SPALATRO.—Thou know'st young Giacopo ?

NEROEIA.— For God's sake, go.

SPALATRO.—Your Excellenza's most devoted friend,
And grateful slave, I do obey thee, lady ;
So—fare thee well, and Fortune grant thee—all
things. [Exit SPALATRO.

*(An interval of silence, during which she gazes
wildly at the door through which he departed.)*

NEROEAE.—'Tis gone—and I am of the dead—alone.
I've talked with horror. They have murdered
me.

I fear myself and walk the world a ghost.

Hark ! There he goes, a message on the wave,
And leaves me here this hour's eternal slave.

SCENE.

The Island of Torcello. Moonlight.

*[The fisherman's cottage; a small lamp in the
casement. The door is open. BEATRICE leans
upon the door-post, her hand from within upon
the hatch; JULIO on the rude steps, without, his
hand on hers.]*

CHORUS.

As on that night they talked alone,
Changed, on a sudden, Julio's tone ;
Paled his cheek, and thrilled his tone
As if a changeless dark or light—
Deathless summer—mortal blight—
The chance or fear of all his life
With that hour began or ended,
On a girlish word depended.

“ Oh ! Beatrice, be thou my wife ! ”

Well had the tiny shaft been shot,
And Cytherea's graceful son,
Laughing saw his work was done ;
And in a true love knot
Tied up all his arrows now,
Fancy-tipt and fiery-shafted,
Smiling too, unstrung his bow.

Through her heart the sweet voice wafted
O'er the frowning hills of life—
Down the shadowy steeps of life—
A call of unseen Fate resembled.

Then upleapt a sudden fear,
Love for a moment chilled and trembled.
She heard the voice so sweetly rise,
Like a bugle in the skies,
And she looked in Julio's eyes
Now so awful, yet so dear.

Days of childhood glad and kind
Away with all their treasures fleet,
Like early bloom on autumn wind,
Whirled before her pausing feet.
Vanishes the cottage wall,
The homely stair, the roses—all —
And the old lamp's friendly spark—
The sameness and the safety o'er her—
And the great wide world before her
Flashes through the weltering dark !

Long although the journey—colder,
Darker than these fears of mine—
With my hand upon thy shoulder
And the other locked in thine ;

And my head upon thy breast,
All is light and all is rest !
So she thought, and both were still,
Then she, trembling, sighed, " I will."

SCENE.

The Island of Torcello. The night following.

[BEATRICE *is seen approaching the window of a
ruinous building.*]

CHORUS.

In red and golden billows
Across the waning skies
The sunset glory wafted
In eastern darkness dies :
Soft floats the gray of twilight
Against the rosy tide,
And now the hosts of heaven
The welkin radiant ride.
From Lido and Murano
The bells have ceased their ringing,
In groves of island gardens

The nightingales are singing ;
The cheer of distant mariners,
The ripple of the sea,
The song upon the waters
Sound sweet and lonelily.
The Moon reginal sailing
Down Adria's mighty lake
A silver largess showers,
That sparkles in her wake.

Cowering from the silvery beams,
The shadowed evergreens among,
Mid leafy crags and dewy bowers,
And ruin-haunting flowers,
Grimly couchant, dreams
A building of another age
Bowed and furrowed as a sage,
And as a monster strong ;
And through their shattered sockets deep,
Flashed by a hellish furnace,
Its wicked windows wince and peep
From under their beetling cornice.

Here in these glimmering dungeons sunk,
Dwells Spalatro, mysterious monk.
Holy, perchance, or darkly wise,
Some hinted he projected gold,
Some whispered that he poisons sold,
And up and down the gamut told
Of Magic's impious mysteries.
About this Friar
All fain had known—or more or less.
But the web of thought for all was ravelled,
They could not tell,
They dared not guess
For his knowledge where he travelled,
Than the door of Heaven higher,
Or lower than the gates of Hell.
With Spalatro there dwelt another
Slave—or brother,
An ugly, loathsome wight,
All as Gehazi white
With mildew of a leprosy.
Him Spalatro, with cynic joy,
Called his Beauty and his Boy.

He looked the child of Death and Sin ;
Bald were his leprous head and chin,
Impish the bestial peak of his ear,
His hanging mouth and goggle leer.
O'er his warped shape this hideous knave
Wore the red frock of a galley slave.
He ever busy, ever by,
Hung like his parted shadow nigh,
That could not quit him quite.
Glooming, hovering hither and forth,
Now stretched a still stain on the earth,
Watching him as he walked or stood,
Watching as he pondered—or passed,
With the glare of a Fiend in servitude,
Who in his master eyes a prey,
Will be commanded, will obey,
But will suffer him never to win away,
Knowing well that his labour o'er,
His hour of lordship will come at last ;
Will come, and change no more.
In those lone, cavernous rooms,
Like the foul spirits in the tombs,

By that furnace throbbing redly,
Among the phials sealed with clay,
Glasses crooked and ashes gray,
Pottering o'er their business deadly,
The two thus smouldered life away.

The glow this night
Of furnace light,
While around the moonlight reigns,
Trembles through the deep-barred panes
That stare, like the eyes of a sullen beast,
Blood-red upon the holy east.

(BEATRICE *taps at the window.*)

SPALATRO.—What makest thou, tapping at my
window, hey?

BEATRICE.—Pardon, good father, I know not
where else

In all the world to look for help.

SPALATRO.— Ay, help!

Ay, always help. The same cry, ever help!

BEATRICE.—My soul is troubled, and thy holy
counsel—

SPALATRO.—Bah ! Holy Policinello ! Penance—
shrift !

How know'st thou I'm in orders ? If I be,
'Tis all one ; for I'm here by the Abbot's order,
Preparing medicines, not to hear confessions.
Trouble ! ha, ha ! We've all our troubles, Baby.
Go to the Carmelites.

(Shutting the window.)

BEATRICE.— One moment, Father !

SPALATRO.—Moment ! I crave my meat like any
other ;

I must work for it. Life's made up of moments.

BEATRICE.—Here, Father, are two *sequins*—I've
no more.

Oh ! sir, for Jesus' love, do not refuse me.

(He takes the money.)

Oh ! thanks, good Signor !

SPALATRO.— But I can't confess thee.

BEATRICE.—'Tis no confession—'tis an omen, sir.
I'm frightened by an omen, and implore—

SPALATRO.—Omen ! what omen ! Come, come,
in a word.

BEATRICE.—A dream, good sir.

SPALATRO.—Ho ! dreams ! and what's thy name ?

BEATRICE.—'Tis Beatrice, Signor.

SPALATRO.— So, Beatrice,

Whose daughter art thou, girl, hey ?

BEATRICE.— Leonardo's,

The fisherman's, who dwells hard by.

SPALATRO.— I know,

I've heard—(*aside*—By heaven, 'tis she)—an
honest man.

His cottage hangs above the water, eh ?

A worthy fisherman as there's in Venice ;

And a steep flight of steps down to the water ;

I've seen his cottage in the creek hard by.

Is it not so ?

BEATRICE.—Just so—(*Aside*—How friendly grows
he !)

SPALATRO.—(*Aside*—Ha ! by St. Mark, I knew
it !) Aye, I know

Thy mother's dead ? I know—and now, good
child,

Pray what's the matter ?

BEATRICE.—In my sleep a dream there came,
Voices talking first I heard,
Talking of a wedding coming,
Of my wedding, as I think.
“ With a Doge’s ring he’ll wed me,”
Said a voice I thought was mine !
’Twas not I who spoke, and yet
I thought within myself ’twas mine.

SPALATRO.—Oh ! ho !

By Lido many a Doge’s ring
Under the surges’ boom and swing,
Mid the dip and wheel of the sea-bird’s wing,
Full fathom five,
Deeper than maiden cares to dive,
Lies low.

BEATRICE.—And my mother was beside me,
White and cold, and smiling sweetly,
Like an angel, smiling sweetly.
Blessèd mother, white and cold,
In a nun-like robe of white—
White and cold as if cold moonlight,
Warp and woof, were spun and shuttled,

Cold the hand she stirred my hand with.
Up got I, and went forth with her.
Smiling, white and cold, she led me
Down the steps and into the ripple.
Nothing felt I of the water ;
Though deeper into the water,
Side by side, we trod together—
Deeper and deeper—beneath the water.
And when I waked, I felt the water
From my face receding cold,
From my face and feet receding.
Water over my bosom gliding,
Coldly from my limbs subsiding,
Gliding like my sleep from me,
And while from death I was emerging
From the wide and lonely sea,
Gentlest winds and waves were dirgeing
With a far, faint melody—
A far, faint, fearful minstrelsy,
O'er the dead men in the sea.

SPALATRO.—A broken dream, and fancies wild—
Away with them, thou silly child !

BEATRICE.—I cannot, Father—'tis in vain,
The fancies of my dream remain
Wheeling wildly in my brain,
Till my eyes are drowsed with pain. '

SPALATRO.—Into the sea, and down the stairs?
Folly, child ! Go—say thy prayers.

BEATRICE. — Stay, Father ! When I try to
pray,
'Tis lips and beads, and only they,
Thought and spirit are far away !

SPALATRO.—Try it again ; the saints will soften ;
A good thing can't be tried too often ;
Ave and pater—every tittle ;
Try *all* the saints, the big and little.

BEATRICE.—The mighty mill-wheel over-shot
With solemn feet and bearded spray
That spins and spins for aye and aye,
Ever changing, changes not,
But with circling foam and feet
Will the self-same measure beat—
Ever coming, ever going,
Parting now, now backward flowing

So these fancies in my brain

Rise and sink, and rise again.

SPALATRO (*calling*).—Boy ! how is the crucible ?

BOY (*within*).—Candescent only, not yet candent.

SPALATRO.—Let it burn a little stronger,

Now !—I cannot stay much longer.

What's the matter ?

BEATRICE.—I saw the dream 'twixt night and
morning.

Father ! think you 'tis a warning ?

SPALATRO.—Tell me—no one hears within—

Have you harboured thought of sin ?

BEATRICE.—No.

SPALATRO.—Come, speak truth, there's no one by !

(*Aside*) Pretty parrots, how they lie !

BEATRICE.—No, I tell thee, Father, truly.

SPALATRO.—Little rogue ! why so unruly ?

Think you not, I know full well

Many a thing I never tell ;

How beneath a window-sill,

Myrtle-shadowed, o'er the water,

Music, on the air of night,

Rises like a sudden light ;
And the Noble, pretty daughter,
Ha ! the Noble whose disguise
Cheats, perchance, all other eyes,
Is seen as clear, I tell you true,
By me, as he is seen by you.

(Looking upwards.)

BEATRICE.—No, Father ! Mary ! Mother ! No !

SPALATRO.—Her eyes are innocent. A good
dream so,

If it means that you must die.

There, don't tremble, do not cry,

When the good hour, clothed in fear,

Of endless rapture draweth near,

Be the bless'd one old or young,

A welcome clear

The angels hear

Thro' all the bells of heaven rung—

'Twas your mother, come to tell

The tidings of that silverous bell.

Why sobbing, child ?

BEATRICE.—I used to see her always near,

Till the sable veil of care,

Fold by fold bedraping me,

Hid her as the cloud the star.

'Tis some evil—'tis not she.

Hell's near us always—heaven so far !

SPALATRO.—Ay, heaven so far, yet very near—

The blinking stars that now you see,

How far,

Measured by miles, each star

'Twixt number and immensity,

'Twixt thought and madness—hung they be

So many miles in space tremendous,

The living brain

Contentends in vain

To seize the sum stupendous.

Yet those stars

Whose distance Time cannot repeat,

With friendly motion,

Nightly on the breast of ocean

Rock and glimmer at our feet.

(*Calling*)—Boy ! how is it ?

BOY (*within*).—Well, but not ripe as yet, so please
you, Father.

SPALATRO (*to BEATRICE again*).—Not all God,
nor yet all devil;

Good commanding useth evil.

Thy open casement courts communion

With the great soul of the night ;

And thy spirit, held in union,

Gave sight;

As each flower, its breath exhaling,

Feeds the incense of the night ;

So each soul its thought retailing

Tints and streaks its spirit-light.

With each holy aspiration,

Crossing shapes of pain and sin,

Sprung of midnight's inspiration,

On the outer air steal in.

Thence our dreams their meanings borrow

From the sounds that not in vain,

O'er the shoreless wastes of sorrow,

O'er the furnace of all pain,

Quiver on the sleeping brain.

CHORUS.

For with the mist pale dreams looked in,
Their feet were up and down upon the stair ;
Her sleep, as in the grave the sleep of sin,
Without a turning, yet with gasp and scare—
Broke never ; for the spirits busy there,
Weighed on her will and made the awful air
Her prison—till she saw the long night out,
And had her warning and her doubt.

SPALATRO.—I fain would help thee—only be thou
frank ;

Under the sacred seal—behold the tonsure.

(He withdraws his cowl.)

Thou may'st tell all ; and in my ear 'tis locked
As in a kist of adamant. Besides,
My art hath told me much concerning thee.
Thou hast a lover—rogue ! ah, ah !—who comes
Rowing his gondola, alone—by night,
By day—whene'er he knows old Leonardo
Is out o' the way. He loves thee well ; and thou
Lov'st him. See, I know all, or next to all.
Come, daughter, hath he talked of marriage? Say.

BEATRICE.—He hath.

SPALATRO.— And thou'st consented ?

BEATRICE.— Yes.

SPALATRO.— 'Tis well—

'Tis very well ! But say the day and hour,
If he hath named them, and I'll tell thee straight
If the stars favour thee. Nay, pretty child,
Dost fear to tell me ?

BEATRICE.— No, good Father, no—
Heaven knows I trust thee. He will come to-
night

At twelve o'clock, and in his gondola
Convey me where a priest shall wed us.

SPALATRO.— Good !

I'm glad—I'm very glad. At twelve o'clock,
No sooner, thou art sure?—ha, well ! Alone, too
'Tis good. Then let me see thy hand. It is
A good hand, wench ! and fortunate ; the thumb
Is Venus, and these lines converging, good—
And this cross line quite excellent, beside
To-day I made, for Julio Contarini,
A youth who hath a venture for to-night,

A scheme that shows the planets all conjoin
To avour enterprise and love this night.
There, there—'tis all most fortunate ! Thy dream
Was but a cheat of envious spirits grudging
Thy coming bliss ; who'd dash the interval
Although th' event they cannot mar. Most like
The youth's impatient—champs the iron time,
And frets and spurns against the tedious hours.
Thou'lt hear of him before the noon of night
Unless my art beguiles me. Hi thee home—
Who knows how suddenly his hasty love
May bid him to thy door ? Away ! The stars
Befriend thee—the good spirits greet thee—go,
In fortune's name, be happy.

(He closes the window.)

BEATRICE.— Thou good man !
Thou good Samaritan ! thou comforter !
If ever blessing followed mercy's steps,
May mine pursue thee. Now all's bright and clear,
Joy above joy ! and I am safe as though
A radiant angel took me by the hand.

Exit BEATRICE.

SCENE.

The interior of Spalatro's Laboratory. The same night and hour.

SPALATRO (*closing the window*).—

She's gone—damned little fool ! I cannot help it.
Ho, there ! Apollo ! A *baiocco*—quick—
From the bag there. On with thy blue *tabarro*—
Thy cap—and get thee down—unmoor the boat—
I join thee in a moment—and we pull
Swift for the city. 'Tis just eight o'clock ;
Give me yon nail and hammer ; get thee gone.

[*Exit ATTENDANT.*

SPALATRO *pierces the coin with the nail, changes his cassock and cowl for a tunic and a cap and feather, buckles on a sword, and puts on a pair of shoes with roses, then with a short cloak and gloves on, and quite disguised, he follows to the boat.*)

SCENE.

The Piazzetta. About nine o'clock.

[*Saunterers, music, and laughter. Enter SPALATRO from the quay alone ; he pauses between the pillars and draws his cloak about him.*]

SPALATRO (*aside*).—About this time walks Giacopo beneath

The cloister of the Doge's palace, here.

Disguised, he said, as an old Spanish merchant.

He must break tryst, and come away with me.

Lo, ha ! there goes a stooped and weak-kneed
sage

In ruff, Toledan hat and cloak—and—ay—

How well he does it—'slife ! 'Tis exquisite—

So stiff and feeble, and so lightly jolted

Out of his way by gay-voiced youths, ha, ha !

Thou comic Death ! I have a job for thee.

(*He crosses the arcade beneath the Doge's palace.*)

Good evening, Don Gonzales.

GIACOPO.— Who ? why ? so !

Your reverence—in such a trim ! Zooks, sir,

You make one laugh—you make an old man
laugh

Until he shakes to pieces ; ha, ha, ha !

SPALATRO.—Come round the corner.

(They walk to the quay.)

Never mind this business,
Beppo can wait. Put off this masquerade,
And go upon an errand will enrich thee.

GIACOPO.—What fee ?

SPALATRO.— Three hundred crowns.

GIACOPO.— What service ?

SPALATRO.—Thou know'st Leonardo's cottage ?

GIACOPO.— Ay, the place

I've tracked young Julio Contarini to—

About that pretty wench, his daughter, eh ?

(SPALATRO nods.)

And the same lady ?

SPALATRO.— Ay.

GIACOPO.— Oh ! come bella !

SPALATRO.—Ay, handsome as a devil ! and her
purse

So long. Come this way.

(The clock of St. Mark's tolls the hour.)

Tempus fugit ! Here,
Take this (*gives him the baiocco*), come this way—
nearer the water's edge.

(They talk low for a few minutes.)

GIACOPO.—And who pays ?

SPALATRO.— I—who else ?

GIACOPO.— We've had some dealings.

SPALATRO.—Many.

GIACOPO.—None quite so large as this. Suppose
You should forget.

SPALATRO.—Why, then you knock my brains out.

GIACOPO.—Ha, ha ! I trust thee ; there's my hand.

SPALATRO.— Enough.

Eleven o'clock. May fortune smile.

GIACQPO.— 'Tis nothing.

*(GIACOPO runs down the stone steps and springs
into his gondola, rowing swiftly round to the
opposite side of the city.)*

SCENE.

The Island of Torcello. Eleven o'clock. The moon has set. The fisherman's cottage.

[*The lamp burning. BEATRICE leaning from the window watching; she stretches her hands towards the sea.*]

BEATRICE.—From the dark come forth, oh ! dearest,

Fold my heart unto thy breast.

Oh ! poor heart, what is't thou fearest ?

Why this sadness and unrest ?

'Tis a change from death to life,

From a recluse to a wife ;

With my love my life is spent,

And marriage is a sacrament.

GIACOPO (*rowing at a distance unseen, sings.*)

Lo Merlo non a testa

Col tal-la-ral-lal-la-ral-tal-la-ral-la,

La testa non a lo Merlo

Povero Merlo ! come fara pensar ?

BEATRICE.—What's that ?

Every little foolish thing

Startles and dismays me now.
Idle fellows always sing,
As by night they homewards row,
Rowing cheer'ly home by night,
Home to kindred and to light,
Home to kindred. Where art thou ?
Mother, would I had thee nigh me,
Just to bless me as I go ;
Hold the lamp, and smiling by me,
Kiss and bless me as I go.

GIACOPO (*nearer—he sings.*)

For jolly weddings in the town
Laughing bells ring up and down !
With partridges and Cyprus wine,
And honey-cates, a feast divine ;
Every fellow fills his skin,
Till the comely bride looks in.
Ring on finger, merry girl !
In each ear a Roman pearl ;
Then to loving groom and lass
Carol we and fill the glass.

(BEATRICE removes the lamp hastily from the window, and looks out in alarm. GIACOPO'S gondola enters the creek. He runs it on the shingle, and steps on the stairs.)

GIACOPO (*beckoning, cap in hand, towards the window, softly*).—

Signora.

BEATRICE.—Lo ! who's there ?

GIACOPO.— A messenger.

BEATRICE.—From whom ? Oh ! speak thy news.

GIACOPO.— From Signor Julio.

BEATRICE.—In Heaven's name, man, speak out.

What hath befallen ?

GIACOPO.—Why, nought but good, Signora. He awaits

Thee in the chapel yonder, with a priest.

BEATRICE.—Thank God ! 'tis well.

GIACOPO.— 'Tis very well, Signora.

Here's a note.

(*She runs to the door, and he gives it to her.*)

BEATRICE (*aside*).— How wickedly he looked !

Methought—but for a moment ! What is it ?
A dream ! oh, Heaven ! yet all too good, and still
It seems unreal, and I'm frightened.

GIACOPO (*calling*).— Come !

BEATRICE (*answering*).—I come, sir, I but take my
beads and mantle.

(*Lower*) Oh, happy, happy hour ! God send us
safe !

So near, and yet as far as Paradise,
Until thou hold'st me, Julio.

GIACOPO (*without*).— Come, lady.

BEATRICE (*answering*).—I come, I come, sir. Only
this—

(*She places on the table, beside the lamp, a note
with these words :*)

“ Father, dearest, to-morrow I return a bride.
Forgive, and still love Beatrice.”

GIACOPO.— Come down,

Young woman ! by the mass ; or else you come
The day after the fair !

BEATRICE.— Good sir, a moment.

GIACOPO (*watching her through the window*).—

She stands and prays before the crucifix—

So let her. Quiet all.

(*He listens seaward.*)

Even so shall I:

We all will make our peace—'tis right—some day.

All sinners. I'd a left this trade long since

If the vile skinflints had but paid fair wages.

But how's a proper man to live and save?

There ever is a right and wrong—and *this*

Is wrong, quite wrong; though it must come
some way,

Fever or plague, to all of us, some day.

She's coming.

BEATRICE (*descending the steps with a small
bundle in her hand, and her mantle about her;
in a low tone*)—

Ho ! Signor Gondolier.

GIACOPO.— Here—by the boat.

BEATRICE.—How dark it is !

GIACOPO.— Ay, lady, very dark !

BEATRICE (*looking up at the window, says softly*)—

Farewell !

GIACOPO (*assisting her into the boat*)—

There, sit where thou art.

BEATRICE.— Thanks, sir.

GIACOPO.—No ; facing t'other way.

BEATRICE.— Thanks, sir ; I will (*changes*).

(*He pushes off the boat and rows swiftly.*)

How far is it, sir ?

GIACOPO.—Hold thy tongue.

(*A pause.*)

How know we, girl,

Who's near. 'Tis Julio's order—

BEATRICE (*whispering to herself*).—Yes ; so dark.

He's right—he's always right. Beloved !

(*Silence, during which GIACOPO rows the boat swiftly for some time.*)

GIACOPO.— What mean'st thou

Over thy shoulder looking still at me ?

Wilt look ahead or no? We may run foul
O' something. Look ahead. Look out. (*Aside*) I
wish

She'd pray. (*Aloud*) Hast ne'er a hymn? Come
now, thou may'st

Be heard.

BEATRICE.—What's that—an island?

GIACOPO.— Ay, the Lido.

BEATRICE.—Voiceless and huge. How black in
the black air—

Down, like a ship forsaken, drifting on us.

Dream-haunting Lido, pass away, oh! quickly.

Father! mother! shall I the roses see

Of sweet Torcello more? To-morrow; yes,

To-morrow. So, good-night, and bless me, father!

Oh! bless your little Beatrice.

GIACOPO.— Wilt sing?

Wilt sing a hymn or no?

BEATRICE.— I will. 'Tis meet, sir,

On such a night—so happy and so fearful.

May God forgive us all. Oh! Julio, soon;

Oh! soon.

(She sings.)

As in a boat, the Lord of life—
Was ever king so lorn ?
Among the roaring billows' strife
Slumbered, travel-worn.

The twelve Apostles did despair
Amid the storm prevailing ;
And standing round Him, filled the air
With fearful words and wailing.

His face so sweet, and king-like form
Upraising at their cry,
With sign and word He stilled the storm,
And laid the billows by.

And thus He is for ever nigh,
E'en when He seems to sleep,
When seas are white, and black the sky,
The Lord my soul will keep.

(She shrieks) Jesu !

(A swift blow descending with the edge of the oar, despatches her, and GIACOPO knots a heavy stone in her dress, and throws her over the gunwale.)

CHORUS.

In a line both straight and long,
Shadowy boat and boatman dart,
With strokes as quivering, swift and strong
As ever shook a maniac's heart.
Ghostly boatman, fleetly soaring
Over Adria's inky swell,
Like the Stygian spectre oaring
Fiercely through the mirk of hell ;
Sudden stopped he in the dark,
Stood to watch and stooped to hark.
Thro' the black and soundless hollow,
Listened to a fear that spoke not,
Scanned pursuit that did not follow.
On his deed the lightning broke not,
To her shrieks the thunder woke not ;
Shadowy sea and shadowy sky
But her shroud and canopy.

Nought he saw and nothing heard,
Not a sound and not a word,
Not the skimming of a bird ;
Breathless still, with crouching stride,
Scowled he, searching far and wide.
Black and still, above and under,
Nature seemed to gather thought,
All things giving pause to ponder
On the deed that he had wrought.

Till headlong through the midnight flying,
He sees a pallor flash before him,
Like a halo in the air ;
Two eyes, not dead, but ever dying,
Back in piteous wonder stare.
He headlong through the darkness flying,
With sparry pinion smites the wave.
“ Bah ! I saw her in the flood
Sinking to her crystal grave,
Like a sculptured maiden lying,
Like a marble splashed with blood,
Stretched and walled beneath the flood.”

Yet haunting look and haunting cry !
Tho' a moment sped you by,
In his tortured ear and eye
Ye shall live eternally.

Gliding onward, now he neared
The voiceless buildings of the town,
Rising shadows that appeared
Like a black navy bearing down,
By demons darkly steered.
Swart against a sky of lead
The outline of the houses gloom,
Like damned ones in the day of doom,
When sun and moon are dead.

As the sea doth grope its way
Thro' the windings of a cave,
Black as ink the lazy wave
Up that street so dark and sly
Lapped its way with crook and croon ;
While the breeze through carvings high
Went humming like a faint bassoon—
Till he has backed his weary oar
And stepped beneath his stooping door.

SCENE.

A rich chamber in the Palazzo of NEROEA.

[*Late on the evening following, one small lamp burning; JULIO having, by means of a bribe, learned from GIACOPO, whom he knew to be one of the Society of Venetian bravos, and who craftily undertook, by means of his opportunities, to unravel the mystery of her fate, what had befallen BEATRICE, and who had procured her death, resolving to avenge it, visits NEROEA. NEROEA discovered alone. Enter JULIO.*]

NEROEA.—Oh ! Julio (*rising with extended arms*).

JULIO.—There—good e'en—stop there ! sit down.

NEROEA.—Oh ! thou art pale ; thou'rt tired ?

JULIO.—Ay, very tired.

NEROEA.—Oh ! dearest, art thou ill ?

JULIO.—Ill ? Sick to death !

NEROEA.—Nay, noble Julio, thou *art* pale !

JULIO.—What ! pale ?

I am not pale. There's another very pale.

No, 'tis the crimson that thine eye hath
dazzled.

NEROEAE.—What crimson ?

JULIO (*waving his arms towards the draperies*)—

This, and this—hast eyes ? and all.

Thou art a Catholic, and wouldst not have

A poor girl buried without bell or dirge.

There is no dirge like that the wind doth pipe ;

The hoarse waves wake an honest lamentation.

A captain in my galley, when a slave

Was drown'd—'twas near the Lido, where the

Doge

Sinks his ring deep ; they're never found again—

Told me the ears of drowning men are filled

With peals of sweet bells till they hear no more.

'Tis thou art pale,

NEROEAE.—

Pale, Julio ! I ?

JULIO.—

Ay, pale

As funeral flames in sunshine. I am sick.

Were I a girl, I'd choose a time—

NEROEAE.—

For what ?

JULIO.—To die in.

NEROEAE.— Die !

JULIO.— Ay, die. I'd have you drop
In your first summer, blooming, fragrant—all ;
For with what measure thou dost mete withal,
To thee again it shall be measured. When
The first small wrinkle, like the worm of death,
Creeps on thy beauty—then all's blasted.
Faugh !

Thou shalt not stay for that. I am a beast.

NEROEAE.—A beast ! Ah, Julio (*she laughs*).

JULIO.— Ay—viribus editor—
By strength I took thee ; thou cam'st not to me.
Dost love me ?

NEROEAE.— Love ? Oh, Julio ! love and fear,
So near, and yet so strange ; so loved, so
awful !

Thy smile means even more than I can read,
And on thy laughter waits an echo faint
From a far place of pain and scorn. Alas !

JULIO.—Dost love me ?

NEROEAE — Julio, to death !

JULIO.— Love whom ?

NEROEAE.—Oh, whom but Julio—thee—my Emperor!

JULIO.—My Caesar's image, wench, and super-
scription—

Gold, gold !

NEROEAE.— My Julio, him alone I love.

JULIO.—Thou liest ! Why dost thou stare ?

Thou liest !

What is to stare at ? Yet I do believe

Thou lov'st thy Julio, ev'n as he loves thee.

Ha !

NEROEAE.—What's the matter ?

JULIO.— Lies.

NEROEAE.— Oh ! cruel, cruel !

JULIO.—Cruel—as cats that toy with mice ; and yet

I'll do the kindest deed to-night that e'er

The stars wept over.

NEROEAE.— Thou wert always kind.

JULIO.—And I'll be kinder. What is life ? What's

good in't ?

Love bleeding lies ; fair truth sunk, never more

So silver clear to speak, how many fathoms

Canst tell, beneath the grass-green sea ?

NEROEAE.— Thou'rt ill,

Oh, Julio, very ill.

JULIO.— No, only kind.

There, sit you still. What's life?

NEROEAE.—Julio, don't talk of life.

JULIO.— Of t'other thing

Mayhap. If I cried Death, and stamped my
foot,

'Twould bring up—what? Ha! seest thou
nothing?

NEROEAE.— No.

Why wilt thou talk so wildly, Julio?

JULIO.— Ha!

Thou'rt frightened, silly bird, because 'tis dark.

It will be darker.

NEROEAE.— Let me call for lights.

JULIO.—Not now; I'll have them by-and-by; not
now.

We hear, methinks, the clearer for the dark.

There was an old man cried—

NEROEAE.— When?

JULIO.— In the night—

Last night, they say—and plucked his silver
locks out,

And beat his wrinkled numb-skull with his fists,
And howled as shrill and hollow as the caves
Of Æolus above the cold, wild sea.

NEROEAE.—Would they brought lights !

JULIO.— What's that? Ay, time enough—
Ay, lights and hands—I'll warrant them by-and-
by

There's something in this room to carry out.
I'm sick.

NEROEAE.— I told thee thou wert ill, my Julio

JULIO.—And by a serpent wounded. I've been mad.

Held to my lips an adder's tongue, and woo'd
The coils of slimy death. Thou pretty witch,
I am no longer mad, but know thee, cold,
And dead, and damned. Thou serpent, lift thy
neck,

And hiss thy last at me. Dust shalt thou eat.

Thy sides are painted with the blood of her

Thou'st crushed and swallowed. Murderous
cannibal !

(NEROEAE *cries wildly, and rushes towards him.*)

Off, Beldame ! Judgment—ho !

NEROEAE.—Mercy ! Oh God.

CHORUS.

Lo where the guileless blood she planned to shed ;

Her own is gliding on the polished floor ;

The ambition and the zealous hate are dead,

The story of the humbler true love o'er.

The last oak of a noble forest towers—

The old Faliero, silent and alone,

Disdaining, through his brief and darkening
hours,

Like feebler miseries, to bend or moan.

Now by a stranger hand the lamp is placed,

And little Beatrice no longer lights

The star he steered by on the moonless nights ;

And when, like spirits lost, the sea-bird shrieks,

And when close-reefed across the roaring waste,

O'er breakers thundering in the shrilly winds ;

His starless boat his wild home darkly seeks,

His eye at last the soulless beacon finds,
Thrills to his heart the ray of other years
Starred dimly in the dark by gathering tears.

In summer evenings, when the isles grow dim,
And seas float silvery round the darkened shore,
Never again awakes the distant hymn,
The laughing, sweet-voiced welcome in the door,
The loving prattle and the glad surprise,
When down the rocky stair the true step flies
To meet him at the gunwale by the shore.
That laughing, loving welcome as of yore,
That dancing step will wake again no more.

The cold sea breaks along the pebbles there,
The door is dark—the stair is but a stair—
And through the straggling roses, weeds wave
 high,
And summer breezes wildering rock and sigh.

DUAN NA CLAEV—THE LEGEND OF THE
GLAIVE.

GAESA—THE EXPLOIT IMPOSED.

Fair-shoulder, Fionula fair,
The wondrous child of Lir's old race,
Answered the hero of the raven hair,
Of the strong hand and princely grace,
The great Cathair.

“ Five leagues hence doth the Norseman lie
Beneath his cromlech gray ;
Three miles round no soul draws nigh
From eve till dawn of day.
Nor friend of man, nor horse, nor hound,
Nought that hath life must cross that ground ;
And in that cromlech, side by side,
The dead man and his sword abide.

And if thou lovest me as thou swarest,
 And for my love thou greatly darest,
 Alone to-night thou'lt seize for me
 The giant glaive of the King of the Sea.
 And so, for aye, his fame and thine,
 And, with thy fame more humbly mine—
 Like three harps sounding in the hall
 To the same high story,
 Of hero glory,
 Shall ring for ever in the ears of all."

Oh ! who'd have dreamed that beneath the
 grace
 Of that rich and wondrous form and face,
 In the midnight blue of her dewy eye,
 As she dropt her gaze with a blush and sigh,
 Alas ! could lie
 Such cruelty ?
 Or who could deem
 That beauty's talisman should gleam—
 A spell to blast him, not to bless—
 From the white brow of the sorceress ?

THE HERO DEVOTES HIMSELF.

Her little sandalled foot before,
Flushed with the wildering light of beauty,

He kneeled and swore—

“ Lady, this moment overpays,

The long eclipse of future days—

’Tis my joy to dare, to die my duty,

If only from my endless night

One lingering star ascends of light

Worthy of thine auroral crown,

And of true love’s forlorn renown.

The story of my adoration,

Like a jewel from the sea

Where I am lost, returned shall be,

A relic and a decoration ;

And minstrels mingle, in the Feats of Fame,

My requiem with thy living beauty’s flame.”

With those words Cathair is gone,

And Fionula is alone.

The hero’s hair blew back and showed

His gleaming eyes and forehead broad ;

His marble face and haughty head,
In resolve already dead.

On to the altar and the knife,
Like one renunciant of his life,
Who nears the sacrificial goal
Holding in his hand his soul—
On, on he paces, mute, alone,
By moss-grown cairn and druid stone,
Broad fields of corn and sloping meadow,
And level light and lengthening shadow,
By purpling hills and yellow woods,
And blazonry of western clouds
That o'er pale green and amber sky,
Weltering in cold and crimson, lie.

Bathed in the evening's spirit tender,
A brown bird sitting on a spray
Whistles its happy soul away,

And thrills with life the silent splendour.
The glorious moment wanes and dies,
And Night rides up the Eastern skies—
Line behind line, and hand in hand,

In sable cloaked, the aërial band,
From pole to pole, ascending far,
In every helm a blinking star ;
While their voiceless march before
Like dust the white mist rises hoar.

So darkness and the dew and hush
Of night came down on slope and bush,
And every glen and blue ravine
Was filmed with smoky haze
And autumn's glow and russet green
Grew blurred and waste before the gaze
Of Cathair as he went by,
And beetling mountain, stark and high,
And fringe of hedgerow 'gainst the sky,
And wild flowers 'neath his foot that lay,
Together melted into gray,
Together in gloom were lost.

As through the Lisses three he crossed,
He knows that unseen shapes are near,
And tittered words are in his ear,
Now here and now there,

Faint harping and singing
And fairy spurs ringing,
And the whirr of their coursers' shrill
tremble in air,
And hovering glee and hovering pain
Their fearful burthen o'er his brain,
Their dreadful fancies shedding ;
As swiftly o'er the throbbing sward,
Through haunted vapours treading,
He sees loom black before his tranced regard
Morrua's forest, nobly wild,
Afar in billowy verdure piled.

THE SONG OF THE SPIRITS.

Far behind him crept blackness and flickering
glimmer,
To the northward, slow mounting, the tempest was
rising,
While luridly glaring all earth lay expecting,
Voiceless and breathless, the yell of the tyrant.
Thus he entered the high, vacant halls of the forest :

No bird in its branches, no antler beneath them,
Nor boom of the beetle, nor bay of the wild dog.
Only, Priestess of Mystery, glides a White Shadow,
On her lip her forefinger—and faithful he followed,
Well knowing his fate led him on to the combat,
Well knowing a mandate of silence upon him.

The trunks of the great trees like time-furrowed
castles,

Gray glimmered through darkness impassive and
awful,

Broad at base and at battlement broader the oak
boles.

And a canopy dusky, snake-twisted, of branches,
Like crypts of cathedrals, low-groined and broad-
pillared,

Stretched mazily this way and that in perspective.

As sweet the evening glories faded

O'er Fionula's bower,

A lone sad voice the maid upbraided,

Charming the twilight hour.

With parted lips and hand to ear

She hearkened to the melody
So wildly and so faintly clear,
At the open casement dreamily.
The lonely splendour of a star
Lay trembling in her virgin tear ;
And with the music, nigh or far,
There fell upon her heart a fear ;
Swift round her ivory throat she drew
The cloak that doth in crimson fold her—
Swift round her shoulder, veined with blue,
And polished as a statue's shoulder ;
Then snapped the jewel in her cloak,
Still through the casement wildly gazing,
Like one whom spirit-songs have woke
From earthly sleep to sights amazing.
The Princess to the postern hied,
Upon her throat the jewel's spark ;
Her hand her pearly ear beside,
Her great eyes gleaming through the dark.

*“ From close of flower, till song of lark,
By mist or moonshine, hill and hollow—*

To follow still and still to hark—

To hearken still and still to follow.”

Strange music of an ecstasy—

’Twas hardly sound, and came unsought ;

She smiled, and listened to the lay

As listening to a sad, sweet thought.

Glares in the west a stain of blood,

The Wizard North its black storm raises—

And eastward o’er Morrue’s wood,

One great white star portentous gazes.

Sitting, spinning in the hall,

With lamps alight, the sunset after,

The whirring task her maids speed all

With silvery song and girlish laughter.

But, like an apparition, she

Is lost—and lost—and lost for ever,

And O their loving eyes shall see

The splendrous Fionula—never.

Lost ; but her love she’ll never find—

Sooner the foam wreath in its wake,

O'er ocean's waste, in ocean's wind,
The flying ship shall overtake.

Through the woods of Morrua and over its root-
knotted flooring,
The hero speeds onward, alone, on his terrible
message ;
When faint and far-off, like the gathering gallop of
battle,
The hoofs of the hurricane louder and louder
come leaping,
There's a gasp and a silence around him a swooning
of nature,
And the forest trees moan, and complain with a
presage of evil.
And nearer, like great organ's wailing, high-piping
through thunder,
Subsiding, then lifted again to a thousand-tongued
tumult,
And crashing, and deafening and yelling in
clangorous uproar

Soaring onward, down-riding, and rending the
wreck of its conquest,
The tempest swoops on : all the branches before it
bend, singing
Like cordage in shipwreck ; before it sear leaves
fly like vapour ;
Before it bow down like wide armies, plumed heads
of the forest,
In frenzy dark-rolling, up-tossing their scathed
arms like Maenads.
Dizzy lightnings split this way and that in the blind
void above him ;
For a moment long passages reeling and wild with
the tempest,
In the blue map and dazzle of lightning, throb
vivid and vanish ;
And white glare the wrinkles and knots of the oak-
trees beside him,
While close overhead clap the quick mocking
palms of the Storm-Fiend.

Now southward drift the din and glare,

Like navies battling in the air ;
On boom the thunder and the wind,
And wreck and silence lie behind,
While whirlwind roars and lightning
burns,

The hero neither tires nor turns.
'Mid the wild wail of shrilly boughs,
And pealing thunder's claps and soughs ;
And by the lightning's livid tapers,
And the black pall of eddying vapours,
He follows the White Shadow's call,
That never swerved for flash or wind,
And never stops nor looks behind,
But leads him to his funeral.

The forest opens as he goes,
And smitten trees in groups and rows
Beneath the tempest's tune,
Stand in the mists of midnight drooping,
By moss-grown rocks fantastic stooping,
In the blue shadows of the yellow
moon.

THE CROMLECH.

And in the moonlight, bleached as bones,
Uprose the monumental stones,
Meeting the hero suddenly
 With a blind stare
 Dull as despair.

The formless boulder that blocked the door
Like a robed monster broad and hoar

 He twice essayed to earth to throw
With quivering sinew, bursting vein,
 With grinding teeth and scowling brow.

From his dark forehead with the strain,
Beads start and drop like thunder-rain ;
And in the breathless tug and reek,
All his lithe body seems to creak.

 The mighty stone to earth is hurled,
Black gapes the violated door,
Through which he rushes to rise no more
 Into this fair, sad world.

THORGIL AND HIS GLAIVE.

Where high the vaults of midnight gape
In the black waste, a blacker shape—
And near against a distant dark,
He could the giant Norseman mark
A black tarn's waters sitting by ;
Beneath a brazen, stormy sky,
That never moves but dead doth lie,—
And on the rock could darkly see
The mighty glaive beside his knee.
The hero's front and upreared form,
Loomed dim as headlands in a storm.
No more will flicker passion's meteors
O'er the dead shadow of his features,
Fixed in the apathy eternal
That lulls him in repose infernal.
The cornice of his knotted brows
A direful shadow downward throws
Upon his eyeballs dull and stark,
Like white stones glimmering in the dark ;
And, carved in their forlorn despair,
His glooming features changeless wear

Gigantic sorrow and disdain,
 The iron sneer of endless pain.
 From the lips of the awful phantom woke
 A voice, and thus, by the tarn, it spoke :—

“ Son of Malmorra, what canst thou gather
 here ? ”

The spell was broke that struck him dumb,
 And held his soul aghast and numb,
 With a wild throb,
 A laugh, and sob,
 The frenzied courage came again
 Of Cathair, the Prince of men.
 With planted foot, with arm extended,
 And his ferine gaze distended,
 Back flowed the cataract of his hair
 From the gleaming face of the great Cathair ;
 And he shouted lion-voiced,
 Like one defying who rejoiced :—
 “ Thorgil, king of the wintry sea,
 Of the nine-gapped sword and minstrel glee,
 Of mountains dark and craggy valleys,

Of the golden cup and the hundred galleys,
Malmorra's son, myself, have sworn
To take thy sword or ne'er return ! ”
The Norseman's phantom, black and dread,
Turned not, lifted not his head.
Mute, without anger or alarm,
As shadow stretches, stretched his arm ;
Upon the hilt his hand he laid,
The metal dull one bell-note made—
One cold flash from the awakened blade
Flecked the waste sky with flying glare,
Like northern lights
That sport o' nights,
Shuddering across the empty air.
High overhead, where died the light
Through the wide caverns of the night,
The imprisoned echoes, whispering first,
Afar in moaning thunders burst.
Mortal armour nought avails—
Shearing the air, the enchanted blade
Of Thorgil a strange music made ;
The brazen concave of the sky
Returns its shrilly sigh,

Above—around—along—

With the roaring shiver of a gong.

Black night around him floating, and booming of
the sea

Have borne away the hero on the spirit-maelstrom
free ;

The shadows round him deepen in his soft and
dreamless flight—

The pause of a new birth,

A forgetting of the earth,

Its action and its thinking,

A mighty whirl and sinking,

A lapsing into Lethe, and the ocean caves of night.

TIR NA N-OGE—THE LAND OF THE YOUNG.

A silvery song is in his ears,

A melody all sad and lone,

The voice that Fionula hears,

And follows still by brake and stone.

It is the voice of early years,

The early love long dead and gone.

His wounded head is on her knee,

Her hand his sable locks among ;

And still the song enchantingly
By that remembered voice is sung
And dreamily he opes his eyes.
Beneath in rosy lustre lies,
With many a shivered line of gold,
A misty lake in many a fold
Of wood, and slope, and rock, and hill,
And riven peak, and winding rill.
Long golden reeds and floating lilies tell
Their secrets and rejoicings to the breeze,
And every flowery star and bloomy bell
That glow like oriel windows 'neath the trees,
In gules and azure mottling the soft sward,
In fragrance and dim music sigh,
And sleep, and wake, but never die.
Such is the blessèd mystery
That of their weakness is the ward.
Here memory doth the hour beguile
And never too much pains or cheers,
Here all things sad are with a smile,
And all rejoicing is with tears.
Through everything there thrills a gladness,

Through everything there throbs a sadness ;
 And memory, love, and gratitude
 A glory shed on every mood.

FIONULA.

*How to this hour she is sometimes seen by night in
 Munster.*

By the foot of old Keeper, beside the *bohreen*,
 In the deep blue of night the thatched cabin is seen ;
 'Neath the furze-covered ledge, by the wild mountain
 brook,
 Where the birch and the ash dimly shelter the
 nook,
 And many's the clear star that trembles on high
 O'er the thatch and the wild ash that melt in the
 sky.
 "Shamus Oge" and old Teig are come home from
 the fair,
 And the car stands up black with its shafts in the
 air,
 A warbling of laughter hums over the floor,

And fragrant's the flush of the turf through the
door.

Round the glow the old folk, and the colleens, and
boys

Wile the hour with their stories, jokes, laughter, and
noise ;

Dogs stretched on the hearth with their chins on
their feet lie,

To her own purring music the cat dozes sweetly ;

Pretty smiles answer, coyly, while soft spins the
wheel,

The bold lover's glances or whispered appeal.

Stealing in, like the leather-wings under the thatch,
A hand through the dark softly leans on the latch,
An oval face peeps through the clear deep of night,
From her jewels faint tremble blue splinters of
light.

There's a stranger among us, a chill in the air,
And an awful face silently framed over there ;

The green light of horror glares cold from each
eye,

And laughter breaks shivering into a cry.
A flush from the fire hovers soft to the door,
In the dull void the pale lady glimmers no more.
The cowering dogs howl, slowly growls the white
cat,
And the whisper outshivers, "God bless us ! what's
that ?"

The sweet summer moon over Aherloe dreams,
And the Galtees, gigantic, loom cold in her beams;
From the wide flood of purple the pale peaks up-
rise,
Slowly gliding like sails 'gainst the stars of the
skies ;
Soft moonlight is drifted on mountain and wood,
Airy voices sing faint to the drone of the flood,
As the traveller benighted flies onward in fear,
And the clink of his footsteps falls shrill on his ear.
There's a hush in the bushes, a chill in the air,
While a breath steals beside him and whispers,
"Beware !"
While aslant by the oak, down the hollow ravine,

Like a flying bird's shadow smooth-gliding, is seen
 Fionula the Cruel, the brightest, the worst,
 With a terrible beauty the vision accurst,
 Gold-filleted, sandalled, of times dead and gone—
 Far-looking, and harking, pursuing, goes on ;
 Her white hand from her ear lifts her shadowy hair,
 From the lamp of her eye floats the sheen of
 despair ;

Her cold lips are apart, and her teeth in her smile
 Glimmer death on her face with a horrible wile.
 Three throbs at his heart—not a breath at his lip,
 As the figure skims by like the swoop of a ship ;
 The breeze dies and drops like a bird on the wing,
 And the pulse of the rivulet ceases to ring ;
 And the stars and the moon dilate o'er his head,
 As they smile out an icy salute to the dead.

The traveller—alone—signs the cross on his breast,
 Gasps a prayer to the saints for her weary soul's
 rest ;

His "gospel" close pressed to the beat of his heart,
 And fears still to linger, yet dreads to depart.

By the village fire crouched, his the story that
night,

While his listeners around him draw pale with
affright ;

Till it's over the country—" God bless us, again ! "

How he met Fionula in Aherloe glen.

SHAMUS O'BRIEN

AND

OTHER POEMS

SHAMUS O'BRIEN.

Jist afther the war, in the year '98,
 As soon as the boys wor all scattered and bate,
 'Twas the custom, whenever a pisant was got,
 To hang him by thrial—barrin' sich as was shot.
 There was trial by jury goin' on by daylight,
 And the martial-law hangin' the lavins by night.

It's them was hard times for an honest gossoon :
 If he missed in the judges—he'd meet a dragoon ;
 An' whether the sogers or judges gev sentence,
 The divil a much time they allowed for repentance.
 An' it's many's the fine boy was then in his keepin',
 Wid small share iv restin', or atin', or sleepin' ;
 An' because they loved Erin, an' scorned to sell it,
 A prey for the bloodhound, a mark for the bullet—
 Unsheltered by night, and unrested by day,
 They'd the heath for their barrack, revenge for their
 pay.

An' the bravest an' hardest boy iv them all
Was Shamus O'Brien, from the town iv Glingall.

His limbs were well set, an' his body was light,
An' the keen-fangèd hound had not teeth half so
white.

But his face was as pale as the face of the dead,
And his cheek never warmed with the blush of the
red ;

An' for all that he wasn't an ugly young bye,
For the divil himself couldn't blaze with his eye,
So droll an' so wicked, so dark and so bright,
Like a fire-flash that crosses the depth of the
night ;

An' he was the best mower that ever has been,
An' the illigantest hurler that ever was seen.

In fincin' he gev Patrick Mooney a cut,
An' in jumpin' he bate Tim Malowney a fut ;
For lightness iv fut there was never his peer,
For, by gorra, he'd almost outrun the red deer ;
An' his dancin' was sich that the men used to
stare,

An' the women turn crazy, he done it so quare ;
An', by gorra, the whole world gev it in to him
there.

An' it's he was the boy that was hard to be caught,
An' it's often he run, an' it's often he fought,
An' it's many's the one can remimber right well
The quare things he done ; an' it's oft I heerd
tell

How he freckened the magisthrates in Cahirbally,
An' escaped through the sodgers in Aherloe Valley ;
An' leathered the yeomen, himself agin' four,
An' stretched the two strongest on ould Galtimore.

But the fox must sleep sometimes, the wild deer
must rest,

An' treachery preys on the blood iv the best.
Afther many a brave action of power and pride,
An' many a hard night on the mountain's bleak
side,

An' a thousand great dangers and toils overpast,
In the darkness of night he was taken at last.

Now, Shamus, look back on the beautiful moon,
For the door of the prison must close on you soon,
An' take your last look at her dim lovely light,
That falls on the mountain and valley this night—
One look at the village, one look at the flood,
An' one at the shelthering, far-distant wood.
Farewell to the forest, farewell to the hill,
An' farewell to the friends that will think of you
still ;

Farewell to the pattrern, the hurlin', an' wake,
And farewell to the girl that would die for your sake.

An' twelve sodgers brought him to Maryborough
gaol,

An' the turnkey resaved him, refusin' all bail.

The fleet limbs wor chained, an' the sthrong hands
wor bound,

An' he laid down his length on the could prison
ground.

An' the dreams of his childhood kem over him
there,

As gentle an' soft as the sweet summer air ;

An' happy remembrances crowding on ever,
As fast as the foam-flakes dhrift down on the river,
Bringing fresh to his heart merry days long gone
by,

Till the tears gathered heavy and thick in his eye.
But the tears didn't fall, for the pride of his heart
Would not suffer one drop down his pale cheek to
start ;

An' he sprang to his feet in the dark prison cave,
An' he swore with the fierceness that misery gave,
By the hopes of the good, an' the cause of the
brave,

That when he was mouldering in the cold grave
His enemies never should have it to boast
His scorn of their vengeance one moment was
lost ;

His bosom might bleed, but his cheek should be
dhry,
For undaunted he lived, and undaunted he'd die.

Well, as soon as a few weeks was over and gone,
The terrible day iv the thrial kem on ;

There was sich a crowd there was scarce room to
stand,

An' sogers on guard, an' dhragoons sword-in-hand ;
An' the court-house so full that the people wor
bothered,

An' attorneys an' criers on the pint iv bein'
smothered ;

An' counsellors almost gev over for dead,
An' the jury sittin' up in their box overhead ;
An' the judge settled out so detarmined an' big,
With his gown on his back, and an illigant new
wig ;

An' silence was called, an' the minute 'twas said
The court was as still as the heart of the dead.
An' they heard but the openin' of one prison lock,
An' Shamus O'Brien kem into the dock.

For one minute he turned his eye round on the
throng,

An' he looked at the bars, so firm and so strong,
An' he saw that he had not a hope, nor a friend,
A chance to escape, nor a word to defend :

An' he folded his arms as he stood there alone,
As calm and as cold as a statue of stone;
And they read a big writin', a yard long at laste,
An' Jim didn't undherstand it, nor mind it a taste.
An' the judge took a big pinch iv snuff, an' he says,
"Are you guilty or not, Jim O'Brien, av you
plase?"

An' all held their breath in the silence of dhread,
An' Shamus O'Brien made answer, and said,
"My lord, if you ask me, if in my life time
I thought any treason, or did any crime
That should call to my cheek, as I stand alone here,
The hot blush of shame, or the coldness of fear,
Though I stood by the grave to receive my death
blow,
Before God and the world I would answer you, no;
But if you would ask me, as I think it like,
If in The Rebellion I carried a pike,
An' fought for ould Ireland from the first to the
close,
An' shed the heart's blood of her bitterest foes,

I answer you, yes, an' I tell you again,
Though I stand here to perish, it's my glory that
then
In her cause I was willing my veins should run
dhry,
An' that now for her sake I am ready to die."

Then the silence was great, an' the jury smiled
bright,
An' the judge wasn't sorry the job was made light;
By my sowl, it's himself was the crabbed ould
chap,
In a twinklin' he pulled on his ugly black cap.
Then Shamus' mother in the crowd standing by,
Called out to the judge with a pitiful cry,
" Oh, judge, darlin', don't, oh, don't say' the word,
The crathur is young, have mercy, my lord ;
He was foolish, he didn't know what he was doin'—
You don't know him, my lord, oh, don't give him to
ruin—
He's the kindest crathur, the tendherest-hearted—
Don't part us for ever, we that's so long parted.

Judge, mavourneen, forgive him, forgive him, my
lord,

An' God will forgive you, oh, don't say the word ! ”

That was the first minute that O'Brien was shaken,
When he saw he was not quite forgot or forsaken ;
An' down his pale cheeks at the words of his
mother,

The big tears wor runnin' fast, one after th'other.
An' two or three times he endeavoured to spake,
But the sthrong manly voice used to falther and
break ;

But at last by the strength of his high-mounting
pride,

He conquered and mastered his grief's swelling
tide,

“ An',” says he, “ mother, darlin', don't break your
poor heart,

For sooner or later the dearest must part ;
And God knows it's betther than wandering in fear
On the bleak, trackless mountains among the wild
deer,

To lie in the grave where the head, heart, and
breast

From thought, labour, and sorrow for ever shall
rest.

Then, mother, my darlin', don't cry any more,
Don't make me seem broken in this my last hour,
For I wish when my head's lyin' undher the raven,
No thrue man can say that I died like a craven !"
Then towards the judge Shamus bent down his
head,
An' that minute the solemn death-sentence was said.

The mornin' was bright, an' the mists rose on high,
An' the lark whistled merrily in the clear sky—
But why are the men standin' idle so late ?
An' why do the crowds gother fast in the street ?
What come they to talk of ? what come they to see ?
An' why does the long rope hang from the cross-
tree ?

Oh ! Shamus O'Brien pray fervent and fast,
May the saints take your soul, for this day is your
last ;

Pray fast an' pray strong, for the moment is nigh,
When sthrong, proud, an' great as you are, you
must die.

An' faster an' faster the crowd gathered there,
Boys, horses and ginger-bread, just like a fair ;
An' whiskey was selling, an' cussamuck too,
And ould men and young women enjoying the
view.

An' ould Tim Mulvany, he med the remark,
There wasn't sich a sight since the time of the Ark ;
An' be gorra 'twas thrue for him, divil such a
scruge,
Sich divarshin and crowds was known since the
delùge.

For thousands was gothered there, if there was one,
Waitin' till such time as the hangin' id come on.

At last they threw open the big prison gate,
An' out came the sheriffs and sodgers in state,
An' a cart in the middle, an' Shamus was in it ;
Not paler, but prouder than ever, that minute.

An' as soon as the people saw Shamus O'Brien,
Wid prayin' and blessin', and all the girls cryin' ;
A wild wailin' sound kem on by degrees,
Like the sound of the lonesome wind blowin' thro'
trees.

On, on to the gallows, the sheriffs are gone,
An' the cart an' the sodgers go steadily on ;
An' at every side swellin' around of the cart,
A wild sorrowful sound that 'id open your heart.

Now under the gallows the cart takes its stand,
An' the hangman gets up wid the rope in his
hand ;
An' the priest having blest him, goes down on the
ground,
An' Shamus O'Brien throws one last look around.
Then the hangman dhrew near, and the people
grew still,
Young faces turned sickly, and warm hearts went
chill ;
An' the rope bein' ready, his neck was made
bare,

For the gripe iv the life-stranglin' cord to prepare :
An' the good priest has left him, havin' said his last
prayer.

But the good priest done more, for his hands he
unbound,

And with one daring spring Jim has leaped to the
ground ;

Bang, bang ! go the carbines, and clash go the
sabres,

He's not down ! he's alive still ! now stand to him
neighbours.

Through the smoke and the horses he's into the
crowd,

By the heavens he's free ! than thunder more loud
By one shout from the people the heavens were
shaken—

One shout that the dead of the world might
awaken.

Your swords they may glitter, your carbines go bang,
But if you want hangin', it's yourselves you must
hang ;

To night he'll be sleepin' in Aherloe Glin,
An' the divil's in the dice if you catch him again.
The sodgers ran this way, the sheriffs ran that,
An' father Malone lost his new Sunday hat ;
An' the sheriffs wor both of them punished
severely,
An' fined like the divil, because Jim done them
fairly.

PHAUDHRIG CROHOORE.

Oh, Phaudhrig Crohoore was the broth of a boy,
 And he stood six foot eight,
 And his arm was as round as another man's
 thigh,

'Tis Phaudhrig was great,—

And his hair was as black as the shadows of night,
 And hung over the scars left by many a fight ;
 And his voice, like the thunder, was deep, strong,
 and loud,

And his eye like the lightnin' from under the cloud.
 And all the girls liked him, for he could spake civil,
 And sweet when he chose it, for he was the divil.

An' there wasn't a girl from thirty-five undher,
 Divil a matter how crass, but he could come round
 her.

But of all the sweet girls that smiled on him, one
 Was the girl of his heart, an' he loved her alone.

An' warm as the sun, as the rock firm an' sure,
Was the love of the heart of Phaudhrig Crohoore ;
An' he'd die for one smile from his Kathleen
O'Brien,

For his love, like his hatred, was sthrong as the lion.

But Michael O'Hanlon loved Kathleen as well
As he hated Crohoore—an' that same was like hell.
But O'Brien liked *him*, for they were the same
parties,

The O'Briens, O'Hanlons, an' Murphys, and
Cartys—

An' they all went together an' hated Crohoore,
For it's many the batin' he gave them before ;
An' O'Hanlon made up to O'Brien, an' says he :
“ I'll marry your daughter, if you'll give her to me.”
And the match was made up, an' when Shrovetide
came on,

The company assimbled three hundred if one :
There was all the O'Hanlons, an' Murphys, an'
Cartys,

An' the young boys an' girls av all o' them parties ;

An' the O'Briens, av coorse, gathered strong on
that day,

An' the pipers an' fiddlers were tearin' away ;

There was roarin', an' jumpin', an' jiggin', an'
flingin',

An' jokin', an' blessin', and kissin', and singin',

An' they wor all laughin'—why not, to be sure?—

How O'Hanlon came inside of Phaudhrig Crohoore.

An' they all talked an' laughed the length of the
table,

Atin' an' dhrinkin' all while they wor able,

And with pipin' an' fiddlin' an' roarin' like tundher,

Your head you'd think fairly was splittin' asundher ;

And the priest called out, " Silence, ye blackguards,
agin ! "

An' he took up his prayer-book, just goin' to begin,

An' they all held their tongues from their funnin'
and bawlin',

So silent you'd notice the smallest pin fallin' ;

An' the priest was just beg'nin' to read, whin the
door

Sprung back to the wall, and in walked Crohoore—

Oh ! Phaudhrig Crohoore was the broth of a boy,
 An' he stood six foot eight,
An' his arm was as round as another man's thigh,
 'Tis Phaudhrig was great—
An' he walked slowly up, watched by many a bright
 eye,
As a black cloud moves on through the stars of the
 sky,
An' none sthrove to stop him, for Phaudhrig was
 great,
Till he stood all alone, just appòsit the sate
Where O'Hanlon and Kathleen, his beautiful bride,
Were sitting so illigant out side by side ;
An' he gave her one look that her heart almost broke,
An' he turned to O'Brien, her father, and spoke,
An' his voice, like the thunder, was deep, sthrong,
 and loud,
An' his eye shone like lightnin' from under the
 cloud :
“ I didn't come here like a tame, crawlin' mouse,
But I stand like a man in my inimy's house ;
In the field, on the road, Phaudhrig never knew fear

Of his foemen, an' God knows he scorns it here ;
 So lave me at aise, for three minutes or four,
 To spake to the girl I'll never see more."

An' to Kathleen he turned, and his voice changed
 its tone,

For he thought of the days when he called her his
 own,

Though his eye blazed like lightnin' from under the
 cloud

On his false-hearted girl, reproachful and proud,
 An' says he : " Kathleen bawn, is it thrue what I
 hear,

That you marry of your own free choice, without
 fear?

If so, spake the word, an' I'll turn and depart,
 Chated once, and once only, by woman's false
 heart."

Oh ! sorrow and love made the poor girl dumb,
 An' she thried hard to spake, but the words
 wouldn't come,

For the sound of his voice, as he stood there fornint
 her,

Wint could on her heart as the night wind in
winther.

An' the tears in her blue eyes stood tremblin' to flow,
O'er her cheek pale as marble, like moonshine on
snow;

Then the heart of bould Phaudhrig swelled high in
its place,

For he knew, by one look in that beautiful face,
That though sthrangers an' foemen their pledged
hands might sever,

Her true heart was his, and his only, for ever.

An' he lifted his voice, like the agle's hoarse call,
An' says Phaudhrig, "She's mine still, in spite of
yez all!"

Then up jumped O'Hanlon, an' a tall boy was he,
An' he looked on bould Phaudhrig as fierce as could
be,

An' says he, "By the hokey! before you go out,
Bould Phaudhrig Crohoore, you must fight for a
bout."

With that then, said Phaudhrig, "I'll do my
endeavour,"

An' with one blow he stretched proud O'Hanlon for
ever.

In his arms he took Kathleen, an' stepped to the
door ;

And he leaped on his horse, and flung her before ;
An' they all were so bother'd, that not a man stirred
Till the galloping hoofs on the pavement were
heard.

Then up they all started, like bees in a swarm,
An' they riz a great shout, like the burst of a
storm,

An' they ran, and they raced, and they shouted
galore ;

But Kathleen and Phaudhrig they never saw more.

But them days are gone by, himself is no more ;
An' the green grass is growin' o'er Phaudhrig
Crohoore,

For he couldn't be aisy or quiet at all ;

As he lived a brave boy, he resolved so to fall.

And he took a good pike—for Phaudhrig was
great—

And he fought, and he fell in the year ninety-eight.

An' the day that Crohoore in the green field was killed,

A sthrong boy was sthretched, and a sthrong heart was stilled.

MOLLY, MY DEAR.

Since last I held your hand, dear Molly, 'tis many's
the year,

But altho' you have wed with another, I still was
true,

For I never could fancy a girl, dearest Molly, but
you,

And the love of my heart was still with you, Molly,
my dear.

When last I held your hand, you were goin' to be
married, my dear,

But I knew by the paleness no cold words of yours
could disguise,

And I knew by the tears that were dimming your
beautiful eyes,

That in spite of them all, dear Molly, you loved me
alone.

Since last I held your hand? I am changed from
what I was then,

In battle, in danger, in storm, in strife I have stood,
Won honour and glory and riches as much as I
would ;

But in this world, dear Molly I'll never be happy
again.

ABHAIN AU BHUIDEIL.

ADDRESS OF A DRUNKARD TO A BOTTLE OF
WHISKEY.

From what dripping cell, through what fairy glen,
Where 'mid old rocks and ruins the fox makes his
den ;

Over what lonesome mountain,

Acuishla machree !

Where gauger never has trod,

Sweet as the flowery sod,

Wild as the breath

Of the breeze on the heath,

And sparkling all o'er like the moon-lighted
fountain,

Are you come to me—

Sorrowful me ?

Dancing—inspiring—

My wild blood firin' ;

Oh ! terrible glory—

Oh ! beautiful siren—

Come, tell the old story—

Come, light up my fancy, and open my
heart.

Oh, beautiful ruin—

My life—my undoin'—

Soft and fierce as a pantheress,

Dream of my longing, and wreck of
my soul,

I never knew love till I loved you, enchanthress !

At first, when I knew you, 'twas only flirtation,

The touch of a lip and the flash of an eye ;

But 'tis different now—'tis desperation !

I worship before you,

I curse and adore you,

And without you I'd die.

Wirrasthrue !

I wish 'twas again

The happy time when

I cared little about you,

Could do well without you,
But would just laugh and view you ;
'Tis little I knew you !

Oh ! terrible darling,
How have you sought me,
Enchanted, and caught me ?
See, now, where you've brought me—
To sleep by the road-side, and dress out in rags.
Think how you found me ;
Dreams come around me—
The dew of my childhood, and life's morning
beam ;
Now I sleep by the road-side, a wretch all in rags.
My heart that sang merrily when I was young,
Swells up like a billow and bursts in despair ;
And the wreck of my hopes on sweet memory flung,
And cries on the air,
Are all that is left of the dream.

Wirrasthrue !
My father and mother,
The priest, and my brother—

Not a one has a good word for you.
But I can't part you, darling, their preaching's all
vain ;

You'll burn in my heart till these thin pulses stop ;
And the wild cup of life in your fragrance I'll
drain

To the last brilliant drop.
Then oblivion will cover
The shame that is over,
The brain that was mad, and the heart that was
sore ;

Then, beautiful witch,
I'll be found—in a ditch,
With your kiss on my cold lips, and never rise
more.

MISCELLANEOUS POEMS

SONG.

The autumn leaf was falling
At midnight from the tree,
When at her casement calling,
“I’m here, my love,” cried he.
‘Come down and mount behind me,
And rest your little head,
And in your white arms wind me,
Before that I be dead.

“You’ve stolen my heart by magic,
I’ve kissed your lips in dreams :
Our wooing, wild and tragic,
Has been in ghostly gleams.
The wondrous love I bear you
Has made one life of twain,
And it will bless or scare you,
In deathless peace or pain.

“ Our dreamland shall be glowing,
If you my bride will be
To darkness both are going,
Unless you ride with me.
Come now, and mount behind me,
And rest your little head,
And in your white arms wind me,
Before that I be dead.”

MEMORY.

One wild and simple bugle sound,
Breathed o'er Killarney's magic shore,
Awakes sweet floating echoes round
When that which made them is no more.

So slumber in the human breast
Wild echoes that will sweetly thrill
Through memory's vistas when the voice
That waked them first for aye is still.

Oh ! memory, though thy records tell
Full many a tale of grief and folly,
Of mad excess, of hope decayed,
Of dark and cheerless melancholy.

Yet, memory, to me thou art
The dearest of the gifts of mind,
For all the joys that touch my heart
Are joys that I have left behind.

THE STREAM.*

When moonlight falls on wave and wimple,
And silvers every circling dimple,

That onward, onward sails :

When fragrant hawthorns wild and simple

Lend perfume to the gales,

When the pale moon in heaven abiding,

O'er midnight mists and mountains riding,

Shines on the river smoothly gliding

Through quiet dales—

I wander on in solitude, .

Charmed by the chiming music rude

Of streams that fret and flow,

For by that eddying stream she stood,

On such a night I trow :

For her the thorn its breath was lending,

On this same tide her eye was bending,

And with its voice her voice was blending

Long, long ago.

* See Appendix, page 158.

Wild stream ! I walk by thee once more,
I see thy hawthorns dim and hoar,

I hear thy waters moan,
And night winds sigh from shore to shore

With hushed and hollow tone ;
But breezes on their light way winging,
And all thy waters' heedless singing,
No more to me are gladness bringing—

I am alone.

Years after years, their swift way keeping,
Like sere leaves down thy current sweeping,

Are lost for aye, and sped—
And Death the wintry soil is heaping

As fast as flowers are shed.
And she who wandered by my side,
And breathed enchantment o'er thy tide,
That makes thee still my friend and guide—
And she is dead.

A DOGGREL IN A DORMANT-WINDOW.

Among the gray roofs nooked,
As Chronos in the skies,
Red chimneys, old and crook'd,
Like headstones round me rise.

The chimneys, crook'd and old,
My neighbours in the air,
Like gods of dingy gold,
Bend sadly here and there.

The crows to roost returning
In their misty woods below—
The hill-tops dimly burning
In the sun's refracted glow—

Like purple shadows sailing
Across the sea-green sky,
Like far waves hoarsely wailing
Call dimly as they fly.

My senses, sadly dreaming,
Just hear and see them fly,
Like bygone shadows streaming
Along pale memory's sky.

From the gray tower with its corbels,
And its belfry arching fair,
The mellow curfew warbles
Its old tune on the air ;

It sails above me welling
Like long soft summer waves,
Still quivering on and swelling
Across the village graves.

My lattice open flies,
The dewy evening air,
Fresh from the starry skies,
Just stirs my silvered hair.

Come forth, my graceful pipe,
My halfpenny pipe of clay,
With Latachia ripe
We'll wile the hour away.

Then musical by space,
Up from the gloaming street
Float sounds and songs apace,
And random prattle sweet—

Bold fellows laughing boldly
With soft-tongued maidens near,
Old people prating oldly,
And children's voices clear.

And in their faint gradations,
While changeless stars gleam o'er us,
I hear three generations
All chiming in one chorus.

The twilight deepens fast,
My pipe grows like a star,
Or a distant smithy's blast,
Or a lighthouse flash from afar.

A lonely man am I,
In my dormant-window thinking,
So lowly, and so high,
The dreamy vapour drinking.

The vapour hangs and dozes,
And the stars no more I see ;
The opening film discloses
A loved pale face to me.

The sad face smiling there,
The young face as of yore,
Inexorably fair,
To speak or change no more.

The brown hair now is gray,
Of him you loved, but to
Your lovely shadow years away
His lonely heart beats true.

And now my pipe is out,
I drop it in the weeds,
It served its little bout,
And quietude succeeds.

And when my glow is o'er,
In ashes quenched my fire,
When its fragrance is no more
And spark and smoke expire ;

152 A DOGGREL IN A DORMANT-WINDOW.

O'er me may some one say,
As I, of you to-day,
Beneath the nettles and the flowers
Where lies my worn-out clay ;

He did in his allotted hours—
What fellows sometimes shirk—
In this enormous world of ours,
His halfpenny-worth of work.

APPENDIX.

NOTE TO "SHAMUS O'BRIEN."

THE following note was prefixed to "Shamus O'Brien" on its first appearance in *The Dublin University Magazine*.

"The following attempt to throw into metrical form, without departing from the southern Irish idiom, a legend of the troubles of '98, was written for a dear and gifted relative, and with a view to recitation, for which the author feels it to be much better suited than for presentation in cold type to a critical public. He relies, however, upon their good nature at least as much as he dreads their justice; and is also comforted by the following considerations:—The friend whom he has mentioned gave a copy of the ballad to our fellow-countryman, Samuel Lover, immediately before

his departure for America, and there, aided by those talents which make Mr. Lover's entertainments so delightful, its success was at once so flattering and decisive as to induce the author to place it at the disposal of his old friend, Anthony Poplar. It is unnecessary to say that had not the unlucky coincidence of the name of the hero and the subject of the ballad with certain incidents in the melancholy history of the last two years, made it unavailable, with propriety, for the purposes of public recitation in Ireland, the author would immeasurably have preferred sending the legend before his countrymen with the great and peculiar advantages it enjoyed at the other side of the water. Such as it is, however, it is heartily at their service."

NOTE TO "PHAUDHRIG CROHOORE."

IN *The Dublin University Magazine* there is a paper on "Hibernian ballads" which Sheridan Le Fanu describes as an "extract from the legacy of the late Francis Purcell, P.P. of Drumcoolagh." "I have observed, my dear friend" (says the writer), "among other grievous misconceptions current among men otherwise well-informed, and which tend to degrade the pretensions of my native land, an impression that there exists no such thing as indigenous modern Irish composition deserving the name of poetry—a belief which has been thoughtlessly sustained and confirmed by the unconscionable literary perverseness of Irishmen themselves, who have preferred the easy task of concocting humorous extravaganzas, which caricature with merciless exaggeration the pedantry, bombast, and blunders incident to the lowest order of Hibernian ballads, to the more pleasurable and

patriotic duty of collecting together the many, many specimens of genuine poetic feeling, which have grown up, like its wild flowers, from the warm though neglected soil of Ireland.

“In fact, the productions which have long been regarded as pure samples of Irish poetic composition, such as ‘The Groves of Blarney,’ and ‘The Wedding of Ballyporeen,’ ‘Ally Croker,’ &c., &c., are altogether spurious, and as much like the thing they call themselves ‘as I to Hercules.’

“There are to be sure in Ireland, as in all countries, poems which deserve to be laughed at. The native productions of which I speak, frequently abound in absurdities—absurdities which are often, too, provokingly mixed up with what is beautiful; but I strongly and absolutely deny that the prevailing or even the usual character of Irish poetry is that of comicality. No country, no time, is devoid of real poetry, or something approaching to it; and surely it were a strange thing if Ireland, abounding as she does from shore to shore with all that is beautiful, and grand, and savage in

scenery, and filled with wild recollections, vivid passions, warm affections, and keen sorrow, could find no language to speak withal, but that of mummary and jest. No, her language is imperfect, but there is strength in its rudeness, and beauty in its wildness; and, above all, strong feeling flows through it, like fresh fountains in rugged caverns.

“And yet I will not say that the language of genuine indigenous Irish composition is always vulgar and uncouth: on the contrary, I am in possession of some specimens, though by no means of the highest order as to poetic merit, which do not possess throughout a single peculiarity of diction. The lines which I now proceed to lay before you, by way of illustration, are from the pen of an unfortunate young man, of very humble birth, whose early hopes were crossed by the untimely death of her whom he loved. He was a self-educated man, and in after-life rose to high distinctions in the Church to which he devoted himself—an act which proves the sincerity of spirit with which these verses were written:—

‘ When moonlight falls on wave and wimple,
And silvers every circling dimple
That onward, onward sails :
When fragrant hawthorns wild and simple
Lend perfume to the gales,
And the pale moon in heaven abiding,
O’er midnight mists and mountains riding,
Shines on the river, smoothly gliding
Through quiet dales—

‘ I wander there in solitude,
Charmed by the chiming music rude
Of streams that fret and flow.
For by that eddying stream *she* stood,
On such a night I trow :
For *her* the thorn its breath was lending,
On this same tide *her* eye was bending,
And with its voice *her* voice was blending
Long, long ago.

‘ Wild stream ! I walk by thee once more,
I see thy hawthorns dim and hoar,
I hear thy waters moan,
And night-winds sigh from shore to shore,
With hushed and hollow tone
But breezes on their light way winging,
And all thy waters’ heedless singing,
No more to me are gladness bringing—
I am alone.

‘ Years after years, their swift way keeping,
Like sere leaves down thy current sweeping,
Are lost for aye, and sped—
And Death the wintry soil is heaping
As fast as flowers are shed.
And she who wandered by my side,
And breathed enchantment o’er thy tide,
That makes thee still my friend and guide—
And she is dead.’

“ These lines I have transcribed in order to prove a point which I have heard denied, namely, that an Irish peasant—for their author was no more—may write at least correctly in the matter of measure, language, and rhyme; and I shall add several extracts, in further illustration of the same fact, a fact whose assertion, it must be allowed, may appear somewhat paradoxical even to those who are acquainted, though superficially, with Hibernian composition. The rhymes are, it must be granted, in the generality of such productions, very latitudinarian indeed, and as a veteran votary of the muse once assured me, depend wholly upon the *vowls* (vowels), as may be seen in the following stanza of the famous ‘ Shanavan Voicth ’:—

““ What’ll we have for supper ? ”
Says my Shanavan Voicth ;
“ We’ll have turkeys and roast *beef*,
And we’ll eat it very *sweet*,
And then we’ll take a *sleep*,”
Says my Shanavan Voicth.’

“ But I am desirous of showing you that, although barbarisms may and do exist in our native ballads, there are still to be found exceptions which furnish examples of strict correctness in rhyme and metre. Whether they be one whit the better for this I have my doubts. In order to establish my position, I subjoin a portion of a ballad by one Michael Finley, of whom more anon. The *gentleman* spoken of in the song is Lord Edward Fitzgerald:—

The day that traitors sould him and inimies
bought him,
The day that the red gold and red blood was
paid—
Then the green turned pale and thrembled like the
dead leaves in autumn,
And the heart an’ hope iv Ireland in the could
grave was laid.

‘The day I saw you first, with the sunshine fallin’
round ye,
My heart fairly opened with the grandeur of the
view :
For ten thousand Irish boys that day did surround
ye,
An’ I swore to stand by them till death, an’ fight
for you.

‘Ye wor the bravest gentleman, an’ the best that
ever stood,
And your eyelid never thrembled for danger nor
for dread,
An’ nobleness was flowin’ in each stream of your
blood—
My blessing on you night an’ day, an’ Glory be
your bed.

‘My black an’ bitter curse on the head, an’ heart,
an’ hand,
That plotted, wished, an’ worked the fall of this
Irish hero bold ;
God’s curse upon the Irishman that sould his native
land,
An’ hell consume to dust the hand that held the
thraitor’s gold.’

“Such were the politics and poetry of Michael Finley, in his day, perhaps, the most noted song-maker of his country ; but as genius is never without its eccentricities, Finley had his peculiarities, and among these, perhaps the most amusing was his rooted aversion to pen, ink, and paper, in perfect independence of which, all his compositions were completed. It is impossible to describe the jealousy with which he regarded the presence of writing materials of any kind, and his ever wakeful fears lest some literary pirate should transfer his *oral* poetry to paper—fears which were not altogether without warrant, inasmuch as the recitation and singing of these original pieces were to him a source of wealth and importance. I recollect upon one occasion his detecting me in the very act of following his recitation with my pencil, and I shall not soon forget his indignant scowl, as stopping abruptly in the midst of a line, he sharply exclaimed :—

“ ‘Is my *pome* a pigsty, or what, that you want a surveyor’s ground-plan of it ?’

“Owing to this absurd scruple, I have been obliged, with one exception, that of the ballad of ‘Phaudhrig Crohoore,’ to rest satisfied with such snatches and fragments of his poetry as my memory could bear away—a fact which must account for the mutilated state in which I have been obliged to present the foregoing specimen of his composition.

“It was in vain for me to reason with this man of metres upon the unreasonableness of this despotic and exclusive assertion of copyright. I well remember his answer to me when, among other arguments, I urged the advisability of some care for the permanence of his reputation, as a motive to induce him to consent to have his poems written down, and thus reduced to a palpable and enduring form.

“‘I often noticed,’ said he, ‘when a mist id be spreadin’, a little brier to look as big, you’d think, as an oak tree; an’ the same way, in the dimness iv the nightfall, I often seen a man tremblin’ and crassin’ himself as if a sperit was before him, at the sight iv a small thorn bush, that he’d leap over with

ase if the daylight and sunshine was in it. An' that's the rason why I think it id be better for the likes iv me to be remimbered in tradition than to be written in history.'

"Finley has now been dead nearly eleven years, and his fame has not prospered by the tactics which he pursued, for his reputation, so far from being magnified, has been wholly obliterated by the mists of obscurity.

* * * * *

"It is due to the memory of Finley to say that the ballad of 'Phaudhrig Crohoore,' though bearing throughout a strong resemblance to Sir Walter Scott's 'Lochinvar,' was nevertheless composed long before that spirited production had seen the light."

Mr. Wm. Le Fanu, in his delightfully entertaining "Seventy years of Irish Life," tells us that he once recited "Phaudhrig Crohoore" at Lord Spencer's (then Lord Lieutenant of Ireland). The Primate (Beresford), after the recital, informed

Lady Spencer that the poem was the work of an Irish peasant who could neither read nor write—one Michael Finley. “Were you aware of this, Mr. Le Fanu?” asked the Primate. “I was, your Grace,” answered Mr. Le Fanu. “And you may be surprised to learn that I knew the Michael Finley, who wrote the ballad, intimately; in fact, he was my brother. In one particular your Grace is mistaken; he could read and write a little.” The Primate, Mr. Le Fanu adds, took the matter in very good part and seemed much amused at the mistake.

This sort of deception seems to have had a strange fascination for Sheridan Le Fanu. The wonderful parish priest of Drumcoolagh—Father Purcell—was another of his mythical authors.



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PRINTED BY GILBERT AND RIVINGTON, LD.,
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